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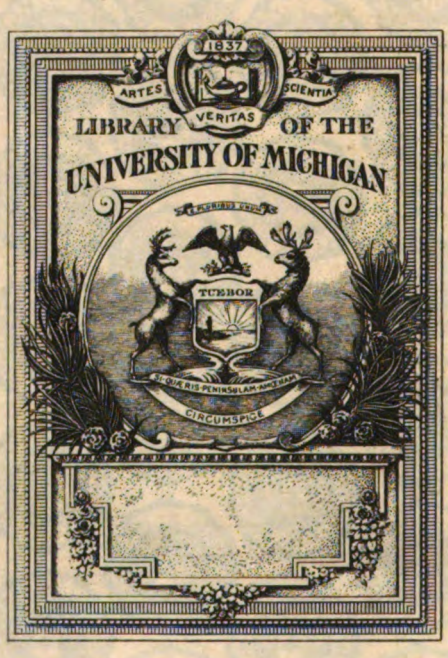
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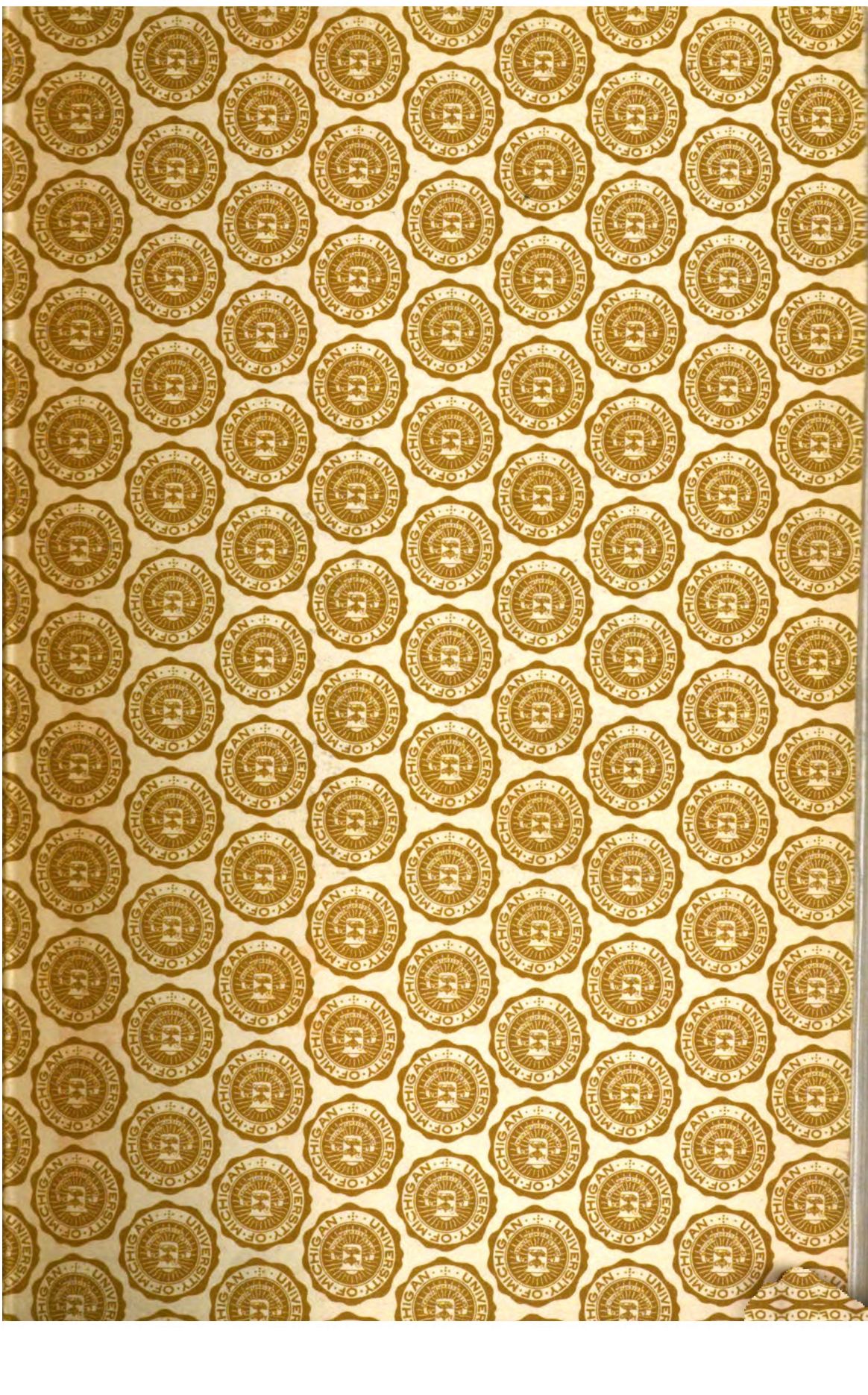

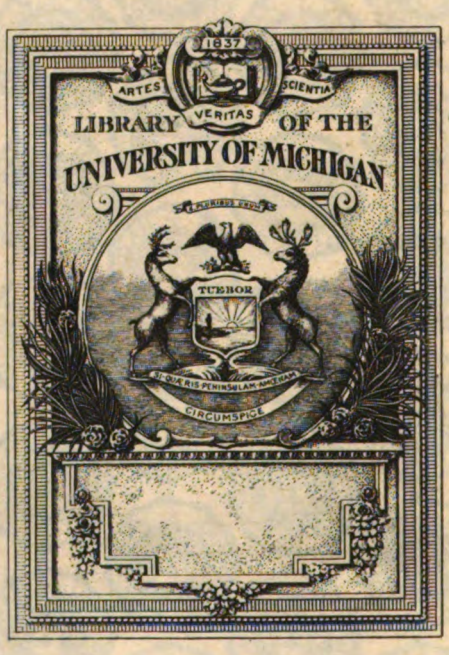
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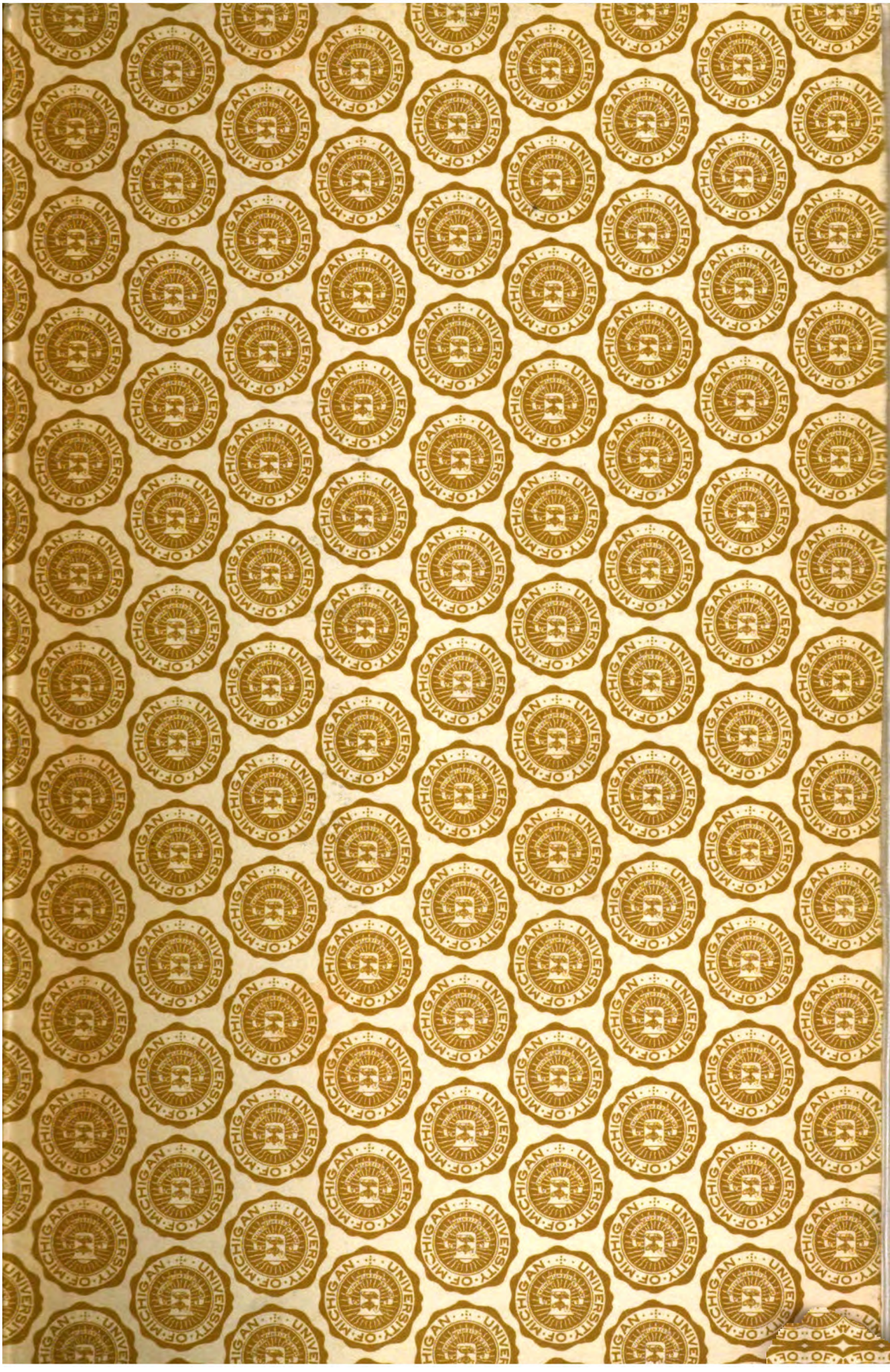

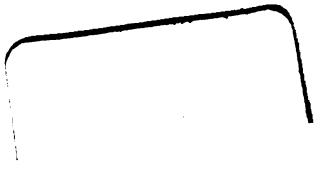

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THE STRAND MAGAZINE

An Illustrated Monthly

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1927

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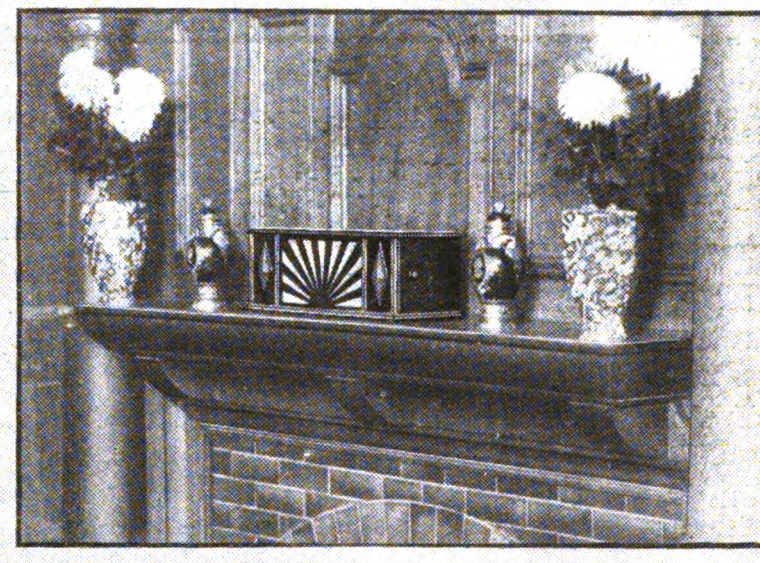

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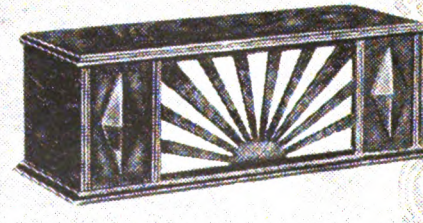

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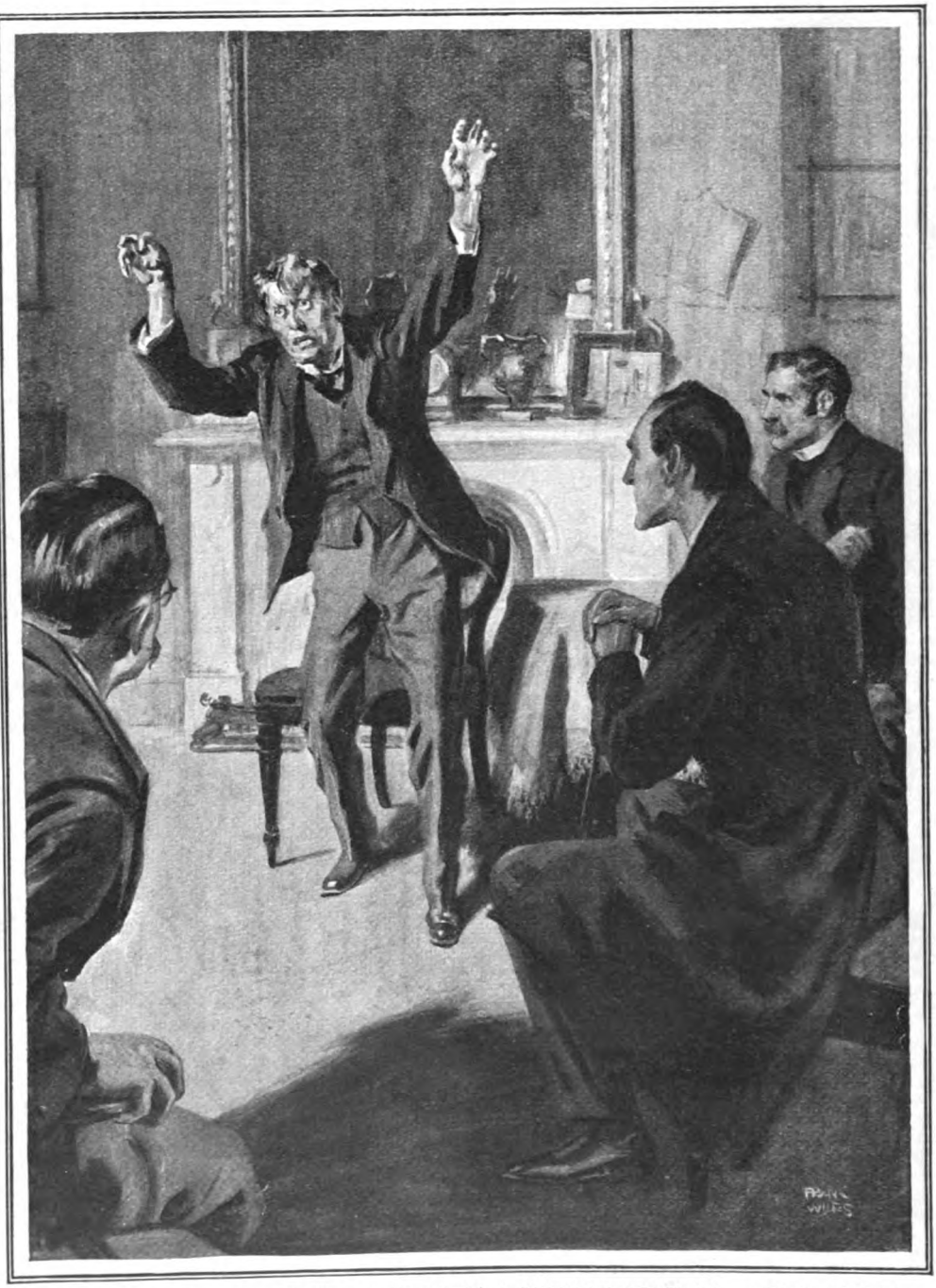
To face back of Frontispiece.

JANUARY, 1927.



THE MAN SPRANG TO HIS FEET WITH A HOARSE SCREAM. HE CLAWED INTO THE AIR WITH HIS BONY HANDS, AND LOOKED LIKE SOME HORRIBLE BIRD OF PREY.

(See page 8.)

A NEW SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY

THE ADVENTURE OF THE RETIRED COLOURMAN

BY

A. Conan Doyle

Illustrated by
FRANK WILES

SHERLOCK HOLMES was in a melancholy and philosophic mood that morning. His alert practical nature was subject to such reactions.

"Did you see him?" he asked.

"You mean the old fellow who has just gone out?"

"Precisely."

"Yes, I met him at the door."

"What did you think of him?"

"A pathetic, futile, broken creature."

"Exactly, Watson. Pathetic and futile. But is not all life pathetic and futile? Is not his story a microcosm of the whole? We reach. We grasp. And what is left in our hands at the end? A shadow. Or worse than a shadow—misery."

"Is he one of your clients?"

"Well, I suppose I may call him so. He has been sent on by the Yard. Just as medical men occasionally send their incurables to a quack. They argue that they can do nothing more, and that whatever happens the patient can be no worse than he is."

"What is the matter?"

Holmes took a rather soiled card from the table. "Josiah Amberley. He says he was junior partner of Brickfall and Amberley, who are manufacturers of artistic materials. You will see their names upon paint-boxes. He made his little pile, retired from business at the age of sixty-one, bought a house at Lewisham, and settled down to rest after a life of ceaseless grind. One would think his future was tolerably assured."

"Yes, indeed."

Holmes glanced over some notes which he had scribbled upon the back of an envelope.

"Retired in 1896, Watson. Early in 1897 he married a woman twenty years younger than himself—a good-looking woman, too, if the photograph does not flatter. A competence, a wife, leisure—it seemed a straight road which lay before him. And yet within two years he is, as you have seen, as broken and miserable a creature as crawls beneath the sun."

"But what has happened?"

"The old story, Watson. A treacherous friend and a fickle wife. It would appear that Amberley has one hobby in life, and it is chess. Not far from him at Lewisham there lives a young doctor who is also a chess player. I have noted his name as Dr. Ray Ernest. Ernest was frequently in the house, and an intimacy between him and Mrs. Amberley was a natural sequence, for you must admit that our unfortunate client has few outward graces, whatever his inner virtues may be. The couple went off together last week—destination untraced. What is more, the faithless spouse carried off the old man's deed-box as her personal luggage with a good part of his life's savings

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within. Can we find the lady? Can we save the money? A commonplace problem so far as it has developed, and yet a vital one for Josiah Amberley."

"What will you do about it?"

"Well, the immediate question, my dear Watson, happens to be, What will *you* do?—if you will be good enough to understudy me. You know that I am preoccupied with this case of the two Coptic Patriarchs, which should come to a head to-day. I really have not time to go out to Lewisham, and yet evidence taken on the spot has a special value. The old fellow was quite insistent that I should go, but I explained my difficulty. He is prepared to meet a representative."

"By all means," I answered. "I confess I don't see that I can be of much service, but I am willing to do my best." And so it was that on a summer afternoon I set forth to Lewisham, little dreaming that within a week the affair in which I was engaging would be the eager debate of all England.

IT was late that evening before I returned to Baker Street and gave an account of my mission. Holmes lay with his gaunt figure stretched in his deep chair, his pipe curling forth slow wreaths of acrid tobacco, while his eyelids drooped over his eyes so lazily that he might almost have been asleep were it not that at any halt or questionable passage of my narrative they half lifted, and two grey eyes, as bright and keen as rapiers, transfixed me with their searching glance.

"The Haven is the name of Mr. Josiah Amberley's house," I explained. "I think it would interest you, Holmes. It is like some penurious patrician who has sunk into the company of his inferiors. You know that particular quarter, the monotonous brick streets, the weary suburban highways. Right in the middle of them, a little island of ancient culture and comfort, lies this old home, surrounded by a high sun-baked wall mottled with lichens and topped with moss, the sort of wall——"

"Cut out the poetry, Watson," said Holmes, severely. "I note that it was a high brick wall."

"Exactly. I should not have known which was The Haven had I not asked a lounger who was smoking in the street. I have a reason for mentioning him. He was a tall, dark, heavily-moustached, rather military-looking man. He nodded in answer to my inquiry and gave me a curiously questioning glance, which came back to my memory a little later.

"I had hardly entered the gateway before I saw Mr. Amberley coming down the drive. I only had a glimpse of him this morning, and he certainly gave me the impression of a strange creature, but when I saw him in full light his appearance was even more abnormal."

"I have, of course, studied it, and yet I should be interested to have your impression," said Holmes.

"He seemed to me like a man who was literally bowed down by care. His back was curved as though he carried a heavy burden. Yet he was not the weakling that I had at first imagined, for his shoulders and chest have the framework of a giant, though his figure tapers away into a pair of spindled legs."

"Left shoe wrinkled, right one smooth."

"I did not observe that."

"No, you wouldn't. I spotted his artificial limb. But proceed."

"I was struck by the snaky locks of grizzled hair which curled from under his old straw hat, and his face with its fierce, eager expression and the deeply-lined features."

"Very good, Watson. What did he say?"

"He began pouring out the story of his grievances. We walked down the drive together, and of course I took a good look round. I have never seen a worse-kept place. The garden was all running to seed, giving me an impression of wild neglect in which the plants had been allowed to find the way of nature rather than of art. How any decent woman could have tolerated such a state of things, I don't know. The house, too, was slatternly to the last degree, but the poor man seemed himself to be aware of it and to be trying to remedy it, for a great pot of green paint stood in the centre of the hall, and he was carrying a thick brush in his left hand. He had been working on the woodwork.

"He took me into his dingy sanctum, and we had a long chat. Of course, he was disappointed that you had not come yourself. 'I hardly expected,' he said, 'that so humble an individual as myself, especially after my heavy financial loss, could obtain the complete attention of so famous a man as Mr. Sherlock Holmes.'

"I assured him that the financial question did not arise. 'No, of course, it is art for art's sake with him,' said he, 'but even on the artistic side of crime he might have found something here to study. And human nature, Dr. Watson—the black ingratitude of it all! When did I ever refuse one of her requests? Was ever a woman so pampered? And that young man—he might have been my own son. He had the run of my house. And yet see how they have treated me! Oh, Dr. Watson, it is a dreadful, dreadful world!'

"That was the burden of his song for an hour or more. He had, it seems, no suspicion of an intrigue. They lived alone save for a woman who comes in by the day and leaves every evening at six. On that particular evening old Amberley, wishing to give his wife a treat, had taken two upper circle seats at the Haymarket Theatre. At the last moment she had complained of a headache and had refused to go. He had gone alone. There seemed to be no doubt about the fact, for he produced the unused ticket which he had taken for his wife."

"That is remarkable—most remarkable," said Holmes, whose interest in the case seemed to be rising. "Pray continue, Watson. I find your narrative most arresting. Did you personally examine this ticket? You did not perchance take the number?"

"It so happens that I did," I answered with some pride. "It chanced to be my old school number, thirty-one, and so it stuck in my head."

"Excellent, Watson! His seat, then, was either thirty or thirty-two."

"Quite so," I answered, with some mystification. "And on B row."

"That is most satisfactory. What else did he tell you?"

"He showed me his strong-room, as he called it. It really is a strong-room—like a bank—with iron door and shutter—burglar-proof, as he claimed. However, the woman seems to have had a duplicate key, and between them they had carried off some seven thousand pounds' worth of cash and securities."

"Cut out the poetry, Watson," said Holmes, severely.

"Securities! How could they dispose of those?"

"He said that he had given the police a list and that he hoped they would be unsaleable. He had got back from the theatre about midnight, and found the place plundered, the door and window open, and the fugitives gone. There was no letter or message, nor has he heard a word since. He at once gave the alarm to the police."

Holmes brooded for some minutes.

"You say he was painting. What was he painting?"

"Well, he was painting the passage. But he had already painted the door and woodwork of this room I spoke of."

"Does it not strike you as a strange occupation in the circumstances?"

"'One must do something to ease an aching heart.' That was his own explanation. It was eccentric, no doubt, but he is clearly an eccentric man. He tore up one of his wife's photographs in my presence—tore it up furiously in a tempest of passion. 'I never wish to see her damned face again,' he shrieked."

"Anything more, Watson?"

"Yes, one thing which struck me more than anything else. I had driven to the Blackheath Station, and had caught my train there, when just as it was starting I saw a man dart into the carriage next to my own. You know that I have a quick eye for faces, Holmes. It was undoubtedly the tall dark man whom I had addressed in the street. I saw him once more at London Bridge, and then I lost him in the crowd. But I am convinced that he was following me."

"No doubt! No doubt!" said Holmes. "A tall, dark, heavily-moustached man, you say, with grey-tinted sun-glasses?"

"Holmes, you are a wizard. I did not say so, but he *had* grey-tinted sun-glasses."

"And a Masonic tie-pin?"

"Holmes!"

"Quite simple, my dear Watson. But let us get down to what is practical. I must admit to you that the case, which seemed to me to be so absurdly simple as to be hardly worth my notice, is rapidly assuming a very different aspect. It is true that though in your mission you have missed everything of importance, yet even those things which have obtruded themselves upon your notice give rise to serious thought."

"What have I missed?"

"Don't be hurt, my dear fellow. You know that I am quite impersonal. No one else would have done better. Some possibly not so well. But clearly you have missed some vital points. What is the opinion of the neighbours about this man Amberley and his wife? That surely is of importance. What of Dr. Ernest? Was he the gay Lothario one would expect? With your natural advantages, Watson, every lady is your helper and accomplice. What about the girl at the post-office, or the wife of the greengrocer? I can picture you whispering soft nothings with the young lady at the Blue Anchor, and receiving hard somethings in exchange. All this you have left undone."

"It can still be done."

"It has been done. Thanks to the telephone and the help of the Yard I can usually get my essentials without leaving this room. As a matter of fact, my information confirms the man's story. He has the local repute of being a miser as well as a harsh and exacting husband. That he had a large sum of money in that strong-room of his is certain. So also is it that young Dr. Ernest, an unmarried man, played chess with Amberley, and probably played the fool with his wife. All this seems plain sailing, and one would think that there was no more to be said—and yet!—and yet!"

"Where lies the difficulty?"

"In my imagination, perhaps. Well, leave it there, Watson. Let us escape from this weary workaday world by the side door of music. Carina sings to-night at the Albert Hall, and we still have time to dress, dine, and enjoy."

IN the morning I was up betimes, but some toast crumbs and two empty eggshells told me that my companion was earlier still. I found a scribbled note upon the table.

"Dear Watson,—There are one or two points of contact which I should wish to establish with Mr. Josiah Amberley. When I have done so we can dismiss the case—or not. I would only ask you to be on hand about three o'clock, as I conceive it possible that I may want you.—S. H."

I saw nothing of Holmes all day, but at the hour named he returned, grave, preoccupied, and aloof. At such times it was wiser to leave him to himself.

"Has Amberley been here yet?"

"No."

"Ah! I am expecting him."

He was not disappointed, for presently the old fellow arrived with a very worried and puzzled expression upon his austere face.

"I've had a telegram, Mr. Holmes. I can make nothing of it." He handed it over, and Holmes read it aloud.

"Come at once without fail. Can give you information as to your recent loss. Elman. The Vicarage."

"Dispatched at two-ten from Little Purlington," said Holmes. "Little Purlington is in Essex, I believe, not far from Frinton. Well, of course, you will start at once. This is evidently from a responsible person, the vicar of the place. Where is my Crockford? Yes, here we have him. J. C. Elman, M.A., Living of Mossmoor cum Little Purlington. Look up the trains, Watson."

"There is one at five-twenty from Liverpool Street."

"Excellent. You had best go with him, Watson. He may need help or advice. Clearly we have come to a crisis in this affair."

But our client seemed by no means eager to start.

"It's perfectly absurd, Mr. Holmes," he said. "What can this man possibly know of

what has occurred? It is waste of time and money."

"He would not have telegraphed to you if he did not know something. Wire at once that you are coming."

"I don't think I shall go."

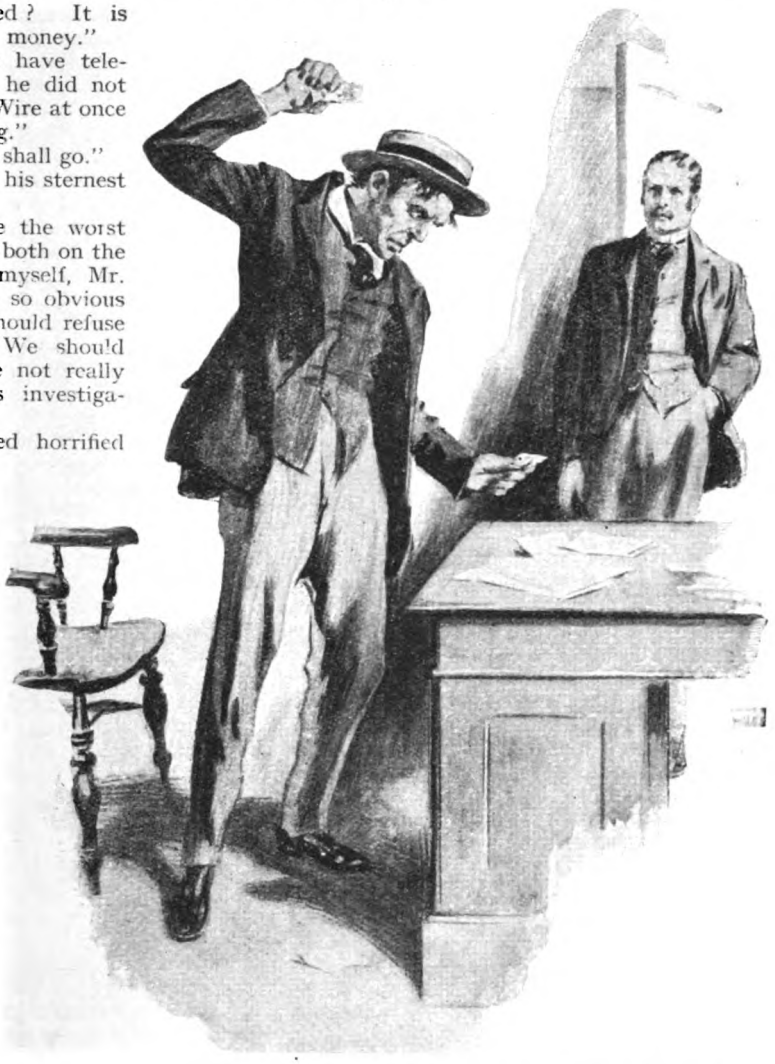
Holmes assumed his sternest aspect.

"It would make the worst possible impression both on the police and upon myself, Mr. Amberley, if when so obvious a clue arose you should refuse to follow it up. We should feel that you were not really in earnest in this investigation."

Our client seemed horrified at the suggestion.

"Why, of course I shall go if you look at it in that way," said he. "On the face of it, it seems absurd to suppose that this parson knows anything, but if you think——"

"I *do* think," said Holmes, with emphasis, and so we were launched upon our journey. Holmes took me aside before we left the room and gave me one word of counsel which showed that he considered the matter to be of importance. "Whatever you do, see that he really *does* go," said he. "Should he break away or return, get to the nearest telephone exchange and send the single word 'Bolted.' I will arrange here that it shall reach me wherever I am."



He tore up one of his wife's photographs in a tempest of passion.

Little Purlington is not an easy place to reach, for it is on a branch line. My remembrance of the journey is not a pleasant one, for the weather was hot, the train slow, and my companion sullen and silent, hardly talking at all, save to make an occasional sardonic remark as to the futility of our proceedings. When we at last reached the little station it was a two-mile drive before we came to the Vicarage, where a big, solemn, rather pompous clergyman received us in his study. Our telegram lay before him.

"Well, gentlemen," he asked, "what can I do for you?"

"We came," I explained, "in answer to your wire."

"My wire! I sent no wire."

"I mean the wire which you sent to Mr. Josiah Amberley about his wife and his money."

"If this is a joke, sir, it is a very questionable one," said the vicar, angrily. "I have never heard of the gentleman you name, and I have not sent a wire to anyone."

Our client and I looked at each other in amazement.

"Perhaps there is some mistake," said I; "are there perhaps two vicarages? Here is the wire itself, signed Elman, and dated from the Vicarage."

"There is only one Vicarage, sir, and only one vicar, and this wire is a scandalous forgery, the origin of which shall certainly be investigated by the police. Meanwhile, I can see no possible object in prolonging this interview."

So Mr. Amberley and I found ourselves on the roadside in what seemed to me to be the most primitive village in England. We made for the telegraph office, but it was already closed. There was a telephone, however, at the little Railway Arms, and by it I got into touch with Holmes, who shared in our amazement at the result of our journey.

"Most singular!" said the distant voice. "Most remarkable! I much fear, my dear Watson, that there is no return train to-night. I have unwittingly condemned you to the horrors of a country inn. However, there is always Nature, Watson—Nature and Josiah Amberley—you can be in close commune with both." I heard his dry chuckle as he turned away.

It was soon apparent to me that my companion's reputation as a miser was not undeserved. He had grumbled at the expense of the journey, had insisted upon travelling third-class, and was now clamorous in his objections to the hotel bill. Next morning, when we did at last arrive in London, it was hard to say which of us was in the worse humour.

"You had best take Baker Street as we pass," said I. "Mr. Holmes may have some fresh instructions."

"If they are not worth more than the last ones they are not of much use," said Amberley, with a malevolent scowl. None the less, he kept me company. I had already warned Holmes by telegram of the hour of our arrival, but we found a message waiting that he was at Lewisham, and would expect us there. That was a surprise, but an even greater one was to find that he was not alone in the sitting-room of our client. A stern-looking, impassive man sat beside him, a dark man with grey-tinted glasses and a large Masonic pin projecting from his tie.

"This is my friend, Mr. Barker," said Holmes. "He has been interesting himself also in your business, Mr. Josiah Amberley, though we have been working independently. But we both have the same question to ask you!"

Mr. Amberley sat down heavily. He sensed impending danger. I read it in his straining eyes and his twitching features.

"What is the question, Mr. Holmes?"

"Only this. What did you do with the bodies?"

The man sprang to his feet with a hoarse scream. He clawed into the air with his bony hands. His mouth was open, and for the instant he looked like some horrible bird of prey. In a flash we got a glimpse of the real Josiah Amberley, a misshapen demon with a soul as distorted as his body. As he fell back into his chair he clapped his hand to his lips as if to stifle a cough. Holmes sprang at his throat like a tiger, and twisted his face towards the ground. A white pellet fell from between his gasping lips.

"No short cuts, Josiah Amberley. Things must be done decently and in order. What about it, Barker?"

"I have a cab at the door," said our taciturn companion.

"It is only a few hundred yards to the station. We will go together. You can stay here, Watson. I shall be back within half an hour."

THE old colourman had the strength of a lion in that great trunk of his, but he was helpless in the hands of the two experienced man-handlers. Wriggling and twisting he was dragged to the waiting cab, and I was left to my solitary vigil in the ill-omened house. In less time than he had named, however, Holmes was back, in company with a smart young police inspector.

"I've left Barker to look after the formalities," said he. "You had not met Barker, Watson. He is my hated rival upon the Surrey shore. When you said a tall dark man it was not difficult for me to complete the picture. He has several good cases to his credit, has he not, Inspector?"

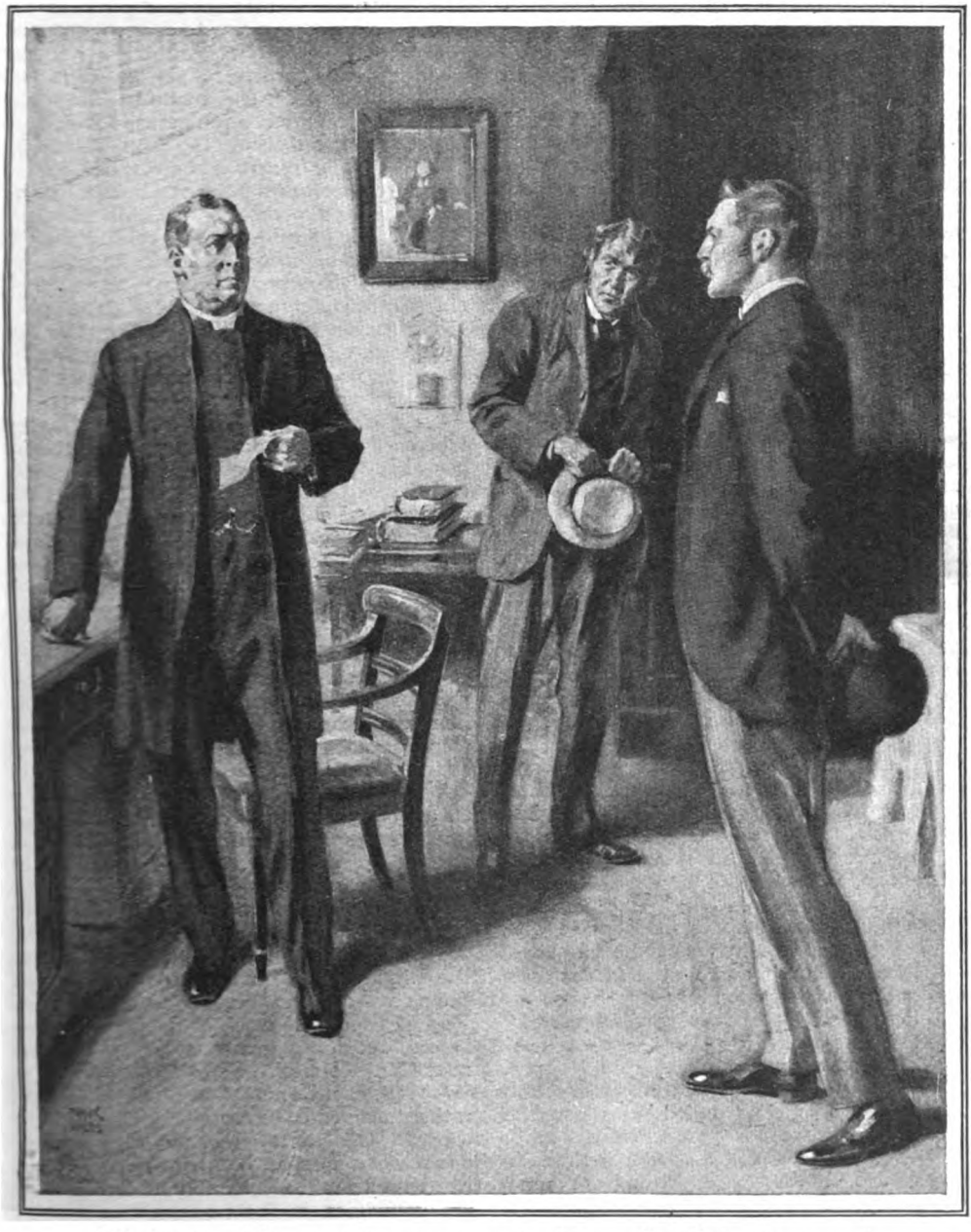
"He has certainly interfered several times," the Inspector answered with reserve.

"His methods are irregular, no doubt, like my own. The irregulars are useful sometimes, you know. You, for example, with your compulsory warning about whatever he said being used against him, could never have bluffed this rascal into what is virtually a confession."

"Perhaps not. But we get there all the same, Mr. Holmes. Don't imagine that we had not formed our own views of this case, and that we would not have laid our hands on our man. You will excuse us for feeling sore when you jump in with methods which we cannot use, and so rob us of the credit."

"There shall be no such robbery, MacKinnon. I assure you that I efface myself from now onwards, and as to Barker, he has done nothing save what I told him."

The Inspector seemed considerably relieved.



"If this is a joke, sir, it is a very questionable one," said the vicar, angrily.

"That is very handsome of you, Mr. Holmes. Praise or blame can matter little to you, but it is very different to us when the newspapers begin to ask questions."

"Quite so. But they are pretty sure to ask questions anyhow, so it would be as well to have answers. What will you say, for example, when the intelligent and enterprising reporter asks you what the exact points were which aroused your suspicion, and finally gave you a certain conviction as to the real facts?"

The Inspector looked puzzled.

"We don't seem to have got any real facts yet, Mr. Holmes. You say that the prisoner, in the presence of three witnesses,

practically confessed, by trying to commit suicide, that he had murdered his wife and her lover. What other facts have you ?"

"Have you arranged for a search ?"

"There are three constables on their way."

"Then you will soon get the clearest fact of all. The bodies cannot be far away. Try the cellars and the garden. It should not take long to dig up the likely places. This house is older than the water-pipes. There must be a disused well somewhere. Try your luck there."

"But how did you know of it, and how was it done ?"

"I'll show you first how it was done, and then I will give the explanation which is due to you, and even more to my long-suffering friend here, who has been invaluable throughout. But, first, I would give you an insight into this man's mentality. It is a very unusual one—so much so that I think his destination is more likely to be Broadmoor than the scaffold. He has, to a high degree, the sort of mind which one associates with the mediæval Italian nature rather than with the modern Briton. He was a miserable miser who made his wife so wretched by his niggardly ways that she was a ready prey for any adventurer. Such a one came upon the scene in the person of this chess-playing doctor. Amberley excelled at chess—one mark, Watson, of a scheming mind. Like all misers, he was a jealous man, and his jealousy became a frantic mania. Rightly or wrongly, he suspected an intrigue. He determined to have his revenge, and he planned it with diabolical cleverness. Come here!"

HOLMES led us along the passage with as much certainty as if he had lived in the house, and halted at the open door of the strong-room.

"Pooh! What an awful smell of paint!" cried the Inspector.

"That was our first clue," said Holmes. "You can thank Dr. Watson's observation for that, though he failed to draw the inference. It set my foot upon the trail. Why should this man at such a time be filling his house with strong odours? Obviously, to cover some other smell which he wished to conceal—some guilty smell which would suggest suspicions. Then came the idea of a room such as you see here with iron door and shutter—a hermetically-sealed room. Put those two facts together, and whither do they lead? I could only determine that by examining the house myself. I was already certain that the case was serious, for I had examined the box-office chart at the Haymarket Theatre—another of Dr. Watson's bull's-eyes—and ascertained that neither B thirty nor thirty-two of the upper circle had been occupied that night. Therefore, Amberley had not been to the theatre, and his *alibi* fell to the ground. He made a bad slip when he allowed my astute friend to notice the number of the seat taken for his wife. The question now arose how I might be able to examine the house. I sent an agent to the most impossible village I could think of, and summoned my man to it at such an hour that he could not possibly get back. To prevent any miscarriage, Dr. Watson accompanied him. The good vicar's name I took, of course, out of my Crockford. Do I make it all clear to you?"

"It is masterly," said the Inspector, in an awed voice.

"There being no fear of interruption I proceeded to burgle the house. Burglary has always been an alternative profession, had I cared to adopt it, and I have little doubt that I should have come to the front. Observe what I found. You see the gas-pipe along the skirting here. Very good. It rises in the angle of the wall, and there is a tap here in the corner. The pipe runs out into the strong-room, as you can see, and ends in that plaster rose in the centre of the ceiling, where it is concealed by the ornamentation. That end is wide open. At any moment by turning the outside tap the room could be flooded with gas. With door and shutter closed and the tap full on I would not give two minutes of conscious sensation to anyone shut up in that little chamber. By what devilish device he decoyed them there I do not know, but once inside the door they were at his mercy."

The Inspector examined the pipe with interest. "One of our officers mentioned the smell of gas," said he, "but, of course, the window and door were open then, and the paint—or some of it—was already about. He had begun the work of painting the day before, according to his story. But what next, Mr. Holmes?"

"Well, then came an incident which was rather unexpected to myself. I was slipping through the pantry window in the early dawn when I felt a hand inside my collar, and a voice said: "Now, you rascal, what are you doing in there?" When I could twist my head round I looked into the tinted spectacles of my friend and rival, Mr. Barker. It was a curious foregathering, and set us both smiling. It seems that he had been engaged by Dr. Ray Ernest's family to make some investigations, and had come to the same conclusion as to foul play. He had watched the house for some days, and had spotted Dr. Watson as one of the obviously suspicious characters who had called there. He could hardly arrest Watson, but when

"I felt a hand inside my collar, and a voice said: 'Now, you rascal, what are you doing in there?'"

he saw a man actually climbing out of the pantry window there came a limit to his restraint. Of course, I told him how matters stood and we continued the case together."

"Why him? Why not us?"

"Because it was in my mind to put that little test which answered so admirably. I fear you would not have gone so far."

The Inspector smiled.

"Well, maybe not. I understand that

I have your word, Mr. Holmes, that you step right out of the case now and that you turn all your results over to us."

"Certainly, that is always my custom."

"Well, in the name of the Force I thank you. It seems a clear case, as you put it, and there can't be much difficulty over the bodies."

"I'll show you a grim little bit of evidence," said Holmes, "and I am sure Amberley himself never observed it. You'll get results, Inspector, by always putting yourself in the other fellow's place, and thinking what you would do yourself. It takes some imagination, but it pays. Now, we will suppose that you were shut up in this little room, had not two minutes to live, but wanted to get even with the fiend who was probably mocking at you from the other side of the door. What would you do?"

"Write a message."

"Exactly. You would like to tell people how you died. No use writing on paper. That would be seen If you wrote on the wall some eye might rest upon it. Now, look here! Just above the skirting is scribbled with a purple indelible pencil: 'We we——' That's all."

"What do you make of that?"

"Well, it's only a foot above the ground. The poor devil was on the floor and dying when he wrote it. He lost his senses before he could finish."

"He was writing, 'We were murdered.'"

"That's how I read it. If you find an indelible pencil on the body——"

"We'll look out for it, you may be sure. But those securities? Clearly there was no robbery at all. And yet he *did* possess those bonds. We verified that."

"You may be sure he has them hidden in a safe place. When the whole elopement had passed into history he would suddenly discover them, and announce that the guilty couple had relented and sent back the plunder or had dropped it on the way."

"You certainly seem to have met every difficulty," said the Inspector. "Of course, he was bound to call us in, but why he should have gone to you I can't understand."

"Pure swank!" Holmes answered. "He felt so clever and so sure of himself that he imagined no one could touch him. He could say to any suspicious neighbour, 'Look at the steps I have taken. I have consulted not only the police, but even Sherlock Holmes.'"

The Inspector laughed.

"We must forgive you your 'even,' Mr. Holmes," said he; "it's as workmanlike a job as I can remember."

A COUPLE of days later my friend tossed across to me a copy of the bi-weekly *North Surrey Observer*. Under a series of flaming headlines, which began with "The Haven Horror" and ended with "Brilliant Police Investigation," there was a packed column of print which gave the first consecutive account of the affair. The concluding paragraph is typical of the whole. It ran thus:—

"The remarkable acumen by which Inspector MacKinnon deduced from the smell of paint that some other smell, that of gas, for example, might be concealed; the bold deduction that the strong-room might also be the death-chamber, and the subsequent inquiry which led to the discovery of the bodies in a disused well, cleverly concealed by a dog-kennel, should live in the history of crime as a standing example of the intelligence of our professional detectives."

"Well, well, MacKinnon is a good fellow," said Holmes, with a tolerant smile. "You can file it in our archives, Watson. Some day the true story may be told."

The next stories in this series will be "The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger" and "The Adventure of the Black Spaniel."

NEXT MONTH:

A NEW PETER JACKSON STORY

By GILBERT FRANKAU

Cupid at the Cross-Roads

By

DENIS MACKAIL

Illustrated by
REGINALD CLEAVER

AT a point in the fair city of Paris not far from where the Avenue de la Grande Armée develops into the Avenue de Neuilly, and where a whole quantity of other *avenues*, *boulevards*, *rues*, and *routes* come rushing together from all points of the compass, there stood, on a bright May morning of warm zephyrs and white chestnut-blossoms, one Alphonse Picard, whom our lively neighbours would have described as an agent of police.

This individual wore a dark-blue uniform, a peaked cap, a short cloak with a hood that fell in graceful folds over the upper part of his spine, and a leather belt which suggested that it had originally been designed to accommodate a sword. His equipment also included a long, white-enamelled truncheon and a small, shrill whistle. And his duty, as he stood there in the midst of whirling, whizzing, and whooping automobiles, was to control the numerous streams of traffic which shot past him in all directions.

This duty he executed by the following two methods, which we shall at once proceed to describe.

The first, or principal, method—which accounted for about nine-tenths of his working day—was to stand stock-still, and with his arms folded across his manly chest; and in this non-committal attitude to watch, with an air of sardonic fatalism, the not unsuccessful efforts of his compatriots to dash by him from north, south, east, and west, without once lifting their feet from their accelerators. At any moment it seemed that this method must lead to the piling up of not fewer than fifty mechanically-propelled vehicles in one glorious heap—with Alphonse Picard buried at the bottom of it. But, whether because the compatriots weren't really going as fast as appeared, or because their incessant horn-blowing had some magical effect, or because they one and all possessed the devil's own skill at directing their particular chariots, the fact remains that day after day they achieved their insane ambition without taking more than a slice of paint off their own and each other's mudguards—which in the fair city of Paris counts for even less than it does in the grey city of London.

Judging, therefore, by results, we may say that M. Picard's first, or principal, method had a good deal to commend it; and we shall go on immediately to his second.

FOR this M. Picard made use of both the long, white-enamelled truncheon and the small, shrill whistle. Placing the latter between his teeth and grasping the former in his right hand, he would wait patiently until he saw a driver whose features seemed to suggest that he might possibly stop if he were told to; and then, stepping suddenly forward, he would raise the white truncheon high above his head, and simultaneously blow the shrill whistle with all his might.

If the driver stopped, well and good. A bunch of pedestrians would run like hares into the roadway, and very likely succeed in reaching the opposite pavement without being killed—thereby more than justifying Alphonse's courage and acumen. And if the driver didn't stop—well, in that case Alphonse would lower his truncheon, pocket his whistle, leap back into safety, and again fold his arms. In this far from infrequent event, the second method merged imperceptibly into the first; the traffic went on faster than ever; and the pedestrians could either go home again or go on walking until they found some more sensible place for crossing the street. The choice was entirely their own affair, and held no interest for M. Picard.

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What did interest him, as it interested all his colleagues engaged on similar work, was the acquisition of a *flair* or sixth sense which should enable him to make as few mistakes as possible in selecting the drivers who might conceivably obey his signals. Naturally, he never attempted to stop a taxi—no Paris policeman has ever managed to do that; and naturally he seldom experimented with the big French and Italian sixes that roared past him, and would have roared over him if he had been rash enough to get in their way. But at the least sign of hesitation from one of the smaller private cars, up would go the truncheon, and with luck another point would be added to his score. He had also learnt that while the onrush of an American radiator might or might not be stemmed—because you couldn't always guess the nationality of the chauffeur—there was generally hope when a British number-plate came sweeping along from the Etoile.

The Englishmen didn't always know whether he were beckoning them on or holding them back (and if they did know, then they had probably driven in Paris long enough to know, also, how very little this mattered); but on the whole they had far the most encouraging effect on M. Picard's average. But for the Englishmen he would probably never have unfolded his arms at all.

HOWEVER, he did unfold them—occasionally. He unfolded them, for instance, at a quarter to twelve on this bright May morning of warm zephyrs and white chestnut-blossoms; he also waved his truncheon over his head and blew his whistle; and the drivers of two English cars, simultaneously perceiving and misunderstanding this peculiar performance, accelerated, converged, shouted at each other, jumped on their brakes, and so came to a standstill—their front wings closely interlocked and their running-boards crushed to the semblance of matchwood.

M. Picard drew quickly back, the rest of the traffic rushed madly on again, and the two drivers, who were of opposite sexes, but very much the same age, addressed each other in a language at which it was at once obvious that they were far from proficient.

"Pardong," said the powerful-looking young man at the wheel of the Brecknock. "*Mais ce n'était pas* my fault."

"*Vous* clumsy idiot," replied the young woman in charge of the Moonbeam. "*N'avez-vous pas vu le* policeman?"

"Of course I did," said the young man. "*Mais je pensais*—— Why, Great Scott! It's Joan! So this is where you've been hiding, is it?"

"Hiding?" echoed the young woman, resentfully. "I haven't been hiding anywhere. Don't be ridiculous!"

"Well, why didn't you answer my letters, then?"

"Because I never read them," said the young woman, promptly. "And, if you've learnt how to reverse that car of yours, I'd be very much obliged if you'd take it away. And yourself."

The young man stuck out his jaw, seemed on the point of making some retort which he might possibly regret, and then appeared to change his mind.

"All right," he said, gruffly.

So he switched on his engine again, and put the gear-lever into reverse, and let in the clutch very gently; and there was a scraping, grinding, and crunching sound; and the engine stopped.

"I'm stuck tight," he reported. "You'd better have a shot yourself."

The young woman sent him another hostile glance, performed similar operations with her own vehicle—except that she let in the clutch with considerably more violence; the scraping, grinding, and crunching sounds were repeated; and her engine also abandoned the impossible.

"Try it forwards," she said, coldly.

So the young man tried it forwards. The Brecknock declined to budge. The two cars continued to cling to each other with all the mutual affection that their owners seemed so conspicuously to lack.

"No go," he announced—unnecessarily. "Your turn now."

The young woman made her second attempt with such fervour that the Moonbeam actually advanced about three inches. Unfortunately, however, she found herself unable to move the steering-wheel, and the three inches merely served to do a little more damage to the spokes of her own wire wheels.

"What *am* I to do?" she asked, in exasperation. And as she looked straight ahead while putting this question—because she was much too angry to look at the young man—it followed that her passionate gaze met that of Alphonse Picard. And Alphonse Picard smiled; which was the joint result of his nationality and of a fact which we have previously been too busy to mention—namely, that the young woman was quite remarkable for her good looks.

He advanced towards her, twirling his truncheon with one hand and his moustache with the other, and said something in his own tongue which conveyed no manner of meaning to Miss Joan Ledbury whatsoever.

She stared at him blankly.

"What's that?" she asked. "I mean—*comment?*"

Alphonse Picard stopped twirling his truncheon and moustache, and, leaning confidentially on the edge of the Moonbeam, either repeated what he had just said, or else said something entirely different. Miss Ledbury hadn't the faintest idea which.

"Colin!" she called out.

"Hullo!" said the young man, who was now out in the roadway, inspecting the crumpled wheels and wings, and finding very little comfort in either. "What's the matter?"

"I can't understand a word this man's saying."

"Oh?" said Colin Chadwick.

"Don't say 'Oh?' like that," snapped Miss Ledbury. "Ask him what on earth he's talking about."

"Oh!" said Mr. Chadwick, a bit doubtfully. "All right." And he turned to Alphonse Picard, and cleared his throat.

"Kesker——" he began, painstakingly. And that was just as far as he got.

"*Aha!*" cried the agent of police, flinging his arms wide open, and smiling again from ear to ear. "*Quelle aventure! Quelle chance! C'est le Capitaine Schadvique, n'est-ce pas?*"

"Captain who?" said Mr. Chadwick, goggling at him.

Alphonse Picard's extraordinary response was to stoop down and attempt, apparently, to embrace Mr. Chadwick in the neighbourhood of his ankles. The latter skipped hastily backwards, and as he did so the policeman stood up again, roared with laughter, and added:—

"Oh, yais. Collar eem low!"

"O-oh!" said Mr Chadwick, as a great light broke upon his long-suffering intelligence. "Of course I remember you. Ra-ther! I say—by Jove!"

"*Aha!*" cried the agent of police, flinging his arms wide open. "*C'est le Capitaine Schadvique, n'est-ce pas?*"

And now, to Miss Ledbury's stupefaction and annoyance, he stepped forward again and shook the policeman warmly by the hand, clapping him at the same time on the shoulder, and receiving a series of affectionate buffets in return. The air was filled, in addition to the incessant rumbling and tooting of the traffic, with friendly, bilingual dialogue in which neither participant listened to what the other was saying, or could have understood it if he had been.

"Colin!" shouted Miss Ledbury, imperiously. "What on earth are you doing?"

"Eh?" said Mr. Chadwick, swinging round and appearing to recollect where he was. "Don't you understand, Joan? We've met before."

"I should hope so," said Miss Ledbury, biting her lip. "But why does he think you're a captain?"

"Football" said Mr. Chadwick. "Rugger. He came over with that French team last year, and, by James, he jolly nearly broke my neck. Why, *you* remember, Joan. I told you about it."

He turned back to beam again on his former adversary, who was still smiling even more gaily than the bright sun overhead, and Miss Ledbury again drove her pearly teeth into her ruby lip; and again she called out in the voice of one who must be obeyed.

"Colin!"

"Hullo! Yes?"

"When you've quite done chatting with your little playmate, you might ask him to keep an eye on my car. Will you?"

"Eh?" said Mr. Chadwick. "Where are you going?"

"Back to the hotel, I suppose. You

don't expect me to sit here all day, do you ?"

Mr. Chadwick could hardly have expected that, but he still didn't seem quite satisfied.

"You—you can't go by yourself," he said. "Not in Paris, I mean."

"Oh, can't I ?" replied Miss Ledbury. And then winced, as she realized what going by herself in Paris had just let her in for.

"And what about your car ?" added Mr. Chadwick.

"I'll send the chauffeur out for it," said Miss Ledbury. "Would you mind calling me a taxi ?"

Alphonse Picard had been turning his bright eyes from one speaker to the other, wondering perhaps what this string of short, clipped sentences could mean. But now, as he caught a word of international significance, he came forward again.

"*Taxi ?*" he repeated, with another charming smile.

"Yes," said Mr. Chadwick. "I mean, *oui. Pour mademoiselle.*"

"*Bien, m'sieur,*" said Alphonse.

He raised his truncheon threateningly at an approaching cab, and blew piercingly on his whistle. The driver flung him a brief, blank, and venomous stare, and whizzed past.

"What happened then ?" asked Miss Ledbury.

"I don't know," said Mr. Chadwick. "Kesker——"

"*Un moment, m'sieur.*"

Again Alphonse flourished the white truncheon and rent the welkin. Two more taxis acknowledged this signal by increasing their speed from thirty to thirty-five miles per hour. And it came into Mr. Chadwick's mind that his old acquaintance—whose name still eluded the same field of thought—was not quite so successful at hailing French taxi-cabs as at checking the progress of British forwards. Looking round to communicate this reflection to the beautiful Miss Ledbury, he was just in time to see her vanishing between an Austro-Daimler and a Delaunay-Belleville.

"Hi!" he shouted, in an agony of apprehension. "Come back at once!"

The beautiful Miss Ledbury stopped—either in obedience to this cry or to escape the onset of an enormously lengthy omnibus with six wheels—and never had Colin Chadwick snatched a ball from the murderous heels of a scrum more swiftly and skilfully than he now rushed at her and hauled her back into safety.

"What the blazes were you trying to do ?" he gasped, in mingled rage, terror, and relief. "For Heaven's sake never do that again!"

For a second her weight, such as it was, rested in his arms—for she was well aware how very nearly her young life had been cut short—and then, abruptly, she stiffened.

"Let go!" she panted, thrusting her elbow into Mr. Chadwick's waistcoat. "What on earth are you doing ? Leave me alone!"

"Will you swear not to——"

"Let go, I tell you!"

"Yes, but——"

"Go away! I hate you!"

ALPHONSE PICARD, turning round from his seventh or eighth unsuccessful attempt to hail one of the innumerable taxis, beheld an interesting sight. Le Capitaine Schadvique and his beautiful compatriot appeared locked in a fond caress. And who said that Englishmen were cold ? With a sudden, reckless impulse, in which a less romantic observer might have detected quite as much irritation as love, le Capitaine Schadvique bent down and imprinted a violent kiss on his beautiful compatriot's cheek.

"You don't!" he shouted.

"I do!" screamed Miss Ledbury.

And she smacked le Capitaine Schadvique's face as hard as she possibly could.

"*Zut!*" said Alphonse Picard, who had seen and appreciated thousands of similar episodes in the streets of his fair city, but yet felt that on this occasion the blow had been a shade too vigorous. He waited eagerly for le Capitaine Schadvique to make the natural retort, which under local rules would have been either a bite or a more or less playful attempt at strangulation; but perhaps Englishmen were a little cold, after all. For le Capitaine Schadvique suddenly released his captive, and appeared stricken with remorse.

"I—I beg your pardon," he said, huskily. "I lost my head."

Miss Ledbury glared at him, trembling with fury.

"You cad!" she gulped. "In front of that horrible policeman, too!"

Sensible that he had somehow or other been brought into the discussion again, M. Picard bowed and smiled. The actions implied general friendliness to all love-affairs, rather more particular friendliness to love-affairs conducted near his post of duty, and most particular friendliness to the love-affairs of English Rugby footballers with whom he had himself fought and struggled. And realizing, possibly, that a mere smile and bow were hardly enough to convey all this to members of a foreign nation, he began to clothe his thoughts in words.

He pointed out that youth and springtime were veritably the season for love, but that it behoved all lovers to avoid those quarrels

which can mar the perfection of the tenderest of passions. With expressive movements of his white truncheon he went on to announce his intense admiration for Miss Ledbury's grace and spirit; which latter possession, however, he regretted deeply to see being employed for the discomfiture of so notable a sportsman as his old friend—if he might call him his old friend—le Capitaine Schadvique. Love, said Alphonse Picard, was the most important thing in the whole world, and Paris was its acknowledged headquarters. Let him, therefore, both as a Parisian and a sportsman, offer a word of advice drawn from his deep experience of affairs of the heart, with no other wish than for the happiness of all concerned. In the Bois over there, only a few hundred yards from where they now stood—and here the white truncheon pointed like an arrow to the south-west—was the Pavillon d'Armononville, a restaurant where the food and service were of the highest quality. Let him suggest that le Capitaine Schadvique and his beautiful companion should stroll over there together, and refresh themselves with a repast which could hardly fail to soothe them after the anxieties through which they had been. Let them stay there as long as they liked, allowing the peace and comfort of their surroundings to calm them after this moment of crisis, and he, Alphonse Picard—here the speaker smote his own chest with the white truncheon—would see that the two automobiles remained where they were until somebody came to fetch them away.

AT the conclusion of this address, of which Miss Ledbury had caught nothing but the word "Pavillon," and Mr. Chadwick nothing but the word "automobiles," M. Picard bowed and smiled again, twirled his moustaches, and once more folded his arms.

His listeners stared at him, and then stared, a little self-consciously, at each other.

"What was all that?" asked Miss Ledbury.

"He said something about the cars," replied Mr. Chadwick. "But Lord knows what he was pointing at."

"I heard him say 'Pavilion.' Do you think that's a French word for garage?"

"Might be," said Mr. Chadwick. "They never seem to call anything by its right name. If you ask for petrol, the silly blighters think you mean hair-wash."

The analogy seemed helpful, in a way.

"One might try," said Miss Ledbury—making skilful use of a common French idiom to avoid committing herself to either "you" or "we."

"All right," said Mr. Chadwick. "Take my hand and we'll make a dash for it."

There was cunning here, too. But as he held out his hand without looking at her, Miss Ledbury did take it.

"Good-bye," shouted Mr. Chadwick, waving his free arm at Alphonse. "Thanks awfully, old chap. See you again soon." And then, without waiting for a reply, he started on one of those swift, swerving runs that had so often landed him right behind the enemy's goal-posts. In and out of the maze of traffic he dodged and leapt, with as firm a grip on Miss Ledbury's hand as had ever clung to an egg-shaped football; and so at last they reached the haven of a gravel sidewalk, and paused for breath.

"This way, do you think?" said Mr. Chadwick, now pointing down an avenue of trees.

"I think so," said Miss Ledbury.

"Come on, then."

THEY began walking. Every now and then they snatched hasty, sidelong glances at each other, and then walked a little faster. If your sense of propriety is still troubled about that kiss, then we should explain that until two months ago they had been engaged to each other. That makes a distinct difference, doesn't it?

"Look," said Mr. Chadwick, suddenly. "Doesn't that signboard say something about a pavilion?"

It did. They turned up a winding drive, and discovered a low building surrounded by tables and chairs, waiters, and a cosmopolitan *clientèle* eating and drinking on green lawns.

"Not my idea of a garage," said Mr. Chadwick. "But—well, I know what we *could* do."

"What?" asked Miss Ledbury.

"Have lunch."

"Oh!" said Miss Ledbury—just like that. "But what about the cars?"

"I'll telephone to your hotel and tell 'em to send your chauffeur out. By the way—where are you staying?"

"At the Crillon," said Miss Ledbury.

"What an extraordinary thing!" said Mr. Chadwick. "So am I. Only arrived last night, you know. I'll tell my chauffeur to come along, too."

"Yes, but——"

"That's all right. No trouble at all."

Mr. Chadwick flew into the low building, left his telephone message and a large tip with a member of the staff, and flew out again.

"Nothing to worry about now," he reported. "Let's feed."

"Yes, but——"

"What? You weren't going anywhere important, were you?"

"No, but——"

"Come on, then. This seems a good table. *Garçon!*"

"Yes, sair!"

"Oh, splendid! Well, look here; we want——"

Mere feeding is no sort of description for the kind of meal that was ordered during the next three minutes. That waiter certainly knew his business.

"Right," said Mr. Chadwick, dismissing him with an encouraging smile, and turning back to his companion. Your people here with you, Joan?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," said Miss Ledbury, taking off her gloves. "Of course. And Eric, too."

"And what?"

"Eric Digby. Don't you remember him?"

"What, not that ghastly little —— Oh, I beg your pardon. No — Joan — please! I didn't mean to say that."

Miss Ledbury relented, and put her gloves down again.

"He's very intelligent and amusing," she said. "He's taken me to all sorts of places."

"Has he, by Jove?"

"And mother's devoted to him."

"Is she, by George?"

"And so's father."

"You don't say so! And you?"

"And I? Well, Colin, at least he doesn't run off and put on a silly little pair of knickerbockers and play ball in the mud, when I want him to take me to a *matinée*."

"Oh!" said Mr. Chadwick, crushing a *croissant* to powder in his huge fist. "I see. But you don't understand, Joan."

"Don't I?"

"I *had* to turn out that day. I couldn't let the whole side down."

"You said that before."

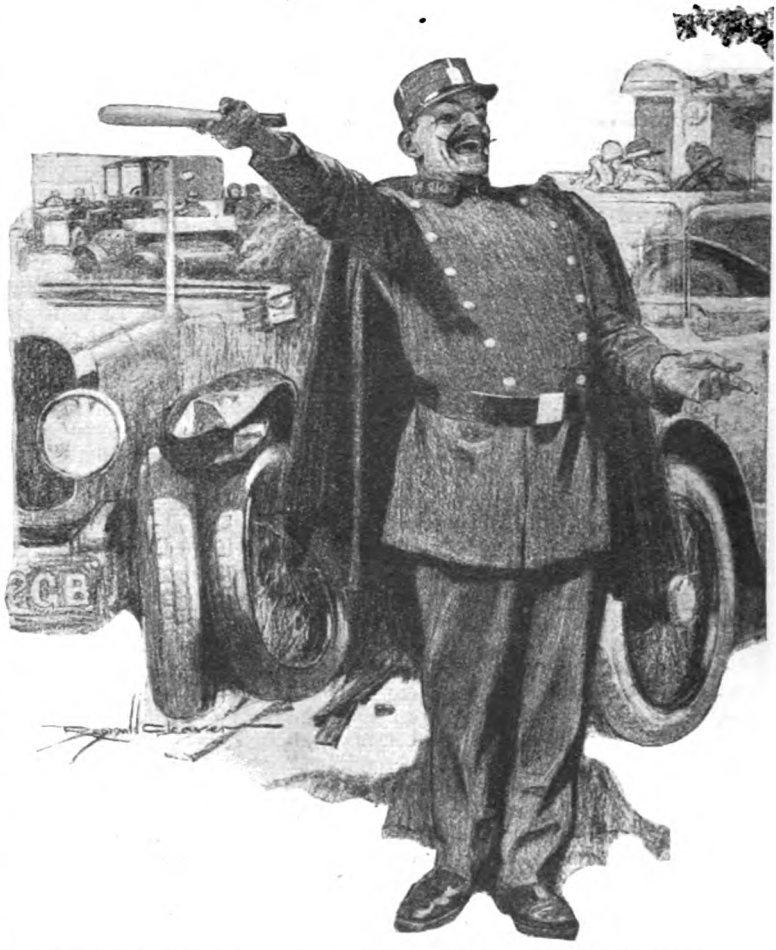
"Yes, but it's true. I know you say it's only a game——"

"No, I don't," interrupted Miss Ledbury. "I say it's a very stupid game, and a very dirty game, and a very boring game, and I'll have one of those anchovies, please."

"Sorry," said Mr. Chadwick, spearing an anchovy and laying it on her plate. "But there's one thing I *would* like to point out."

"Would you?"

"Yes. It's not a game that anyone plays from now till the end of September, and, anyway——"



With expressive movements of his white truncheon M. Picard suggested that they should stroll over to a restaurant in the Bois and refresh themselves.

"You think five months in the year is enough to devote to married life, do you?" Miss Ledbury cut in.

"Of course I don't. You talk as if I played rugger twelve hours a day."

"I wouldn't mind that so much, if you didn't think it for twenty-four. At your age, too!"

"Ah!" said Mr. Chadwick. "That's just what I was coming to. I'm twenty-five, you know, Joan. If I get another three or four seasons, it'll be as much as I can hope for."

"There's always golf," said Miss Ledbury, with deliberate cruelty. "Shall we talk about something else?"

They reached the Place de la Concorde in the same taxi at about a quarter to four, swung round on two wheels, and stopped.

"Hullo!" said Miss Ledbury, pointing to one of the largest and most glittering of the many motors that were parked outside the Crillon. "There's Eric's car. It's lucky I shall be able to use it while mine's being mended, isn't it?"

Mr. Chadwick scowled at the international number-plate exhibited on the car's hind-quarters, and said nothing.

"Eric's a *wonderful* driver," added Miss Ledbury, pointedly. And she held out her gloved hand. "Well, thanks awfully, Colin. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," said Mr. Chadwick, automatically. "Er—Joan——"

"Yes?"

"Joan, I—I mean—I suppose——"

"What?"

No; he'd better leave it. This broad, crowded pavement was no place in which to re-open a subject from which he had already been most definitely warned off. He rammed his hat on to his head, turned round, hunched up his broad shoulders, and ran off to the neighbouring garage. Miss Ledbury gazed after him, smiled, frowned, and so vanished through the glass doors of their joint hotel.

THE Moonbeam, said the experts, was suffering—as well as from more obvious injuries—from a twisted axle that would mean at least a week in dock. But the Brecknock, though battered, was still drivable.

"I see," said Mr. Chadwick, seeing, indeed, how directly the former fact would play into the hands of Mr. Eric Digby, and again cursing the memory of Alphonse Picard.

But what could he do? Unless—— A sudden brilliant idea sent him galloping back into the Crillon and up to his own room. He would ring Miss Ledbury up and offer to lend her the Brecknock. Devotion, tact, atonement, and—well, yes—Machiavellian guile would all be comprised in such a proposal. He asked the operator for the Ledburys' suite. He waited.

"Hullo! Who's that?"

Old Mr. Ledbury's voice, and clearly not in the best of tempers. Mr. Chadwick rang off quickly. Something much milder than Machiavellian guile told him that old Mr. Ledbury had just been apprised of the accident, and that this was not the moment to draw unnecessary attention to himself.

"Um," he said, walking up and down his richly-carpeted room. "There must be *something* I could do—if only I could think what."

But that elusive something refused to present itself. He haunted the public rooms all that evening, but not a Ledbury did he behold. Mr. Digby's glittering monster had gone from the car-park. Mr. Chadwick's vitals were consumed by jealousy and black despair.

YET, as so often happens, the morning brought hope. We cannot sufficiently emphasize that the fantastic notion which formed itself in Mr. Chadwick's head as soon as he awoke conveys no reflection on the intelligence of Rugby footballers as a whole. It was as a lover, and distinctly not as an athlete, that he conceived the extraordinary idea of fetching his Brecknock round to the front of the Crillon, and of sitting in it continuously and indefatigably—rather like the Frog-Footman on the Duchess's doorstep—until such time as Miss Ledbury should emerge from those glass doors; when he was to leap out, dash forward, and offer his services as chauffeur-companion for any purposes that she might require.

The plan, as is obvious, wholly overlooked the existence of both Miss Ledbury's parents, not to mention Mr. Eric Digby and the glittering monster. But the concentration of love's gaze, which has often been mistaken for blindness, continued to hide these obstacles. Mr. Chadwick did fetch the Brecknock round to the front of the Crillon, and he did sit in it, doggedly and persistently; and he did fasten his eyes on those glass doors so fixedly and fiercely that he never even noticed when Mr. Digby's chauffeur parked the glittering monster immediately behind him.

At half-past twelve, after the glass doors had parted and closed several hundred times, they parted once more—and there was Miss Ledbury.

Mr. Chadwick immediately leapt out of his Brecknock, and dashed forward.

"Joan——" he began, hoarsely and wildly.

"Quick!" interrupted Miss Ledbury. "Take me somewhere quickly!"

Mr. Chadwick was so much surprised and enchanted that he remained rooted to the pavement.

"Hurry up!" cried Miss Ledbury, seizing him by the arm. "I've had a row with Eric, and he's looking for me. Quick, I tell you!"

"A row?" repeated Mr. Chadwick, standing stock-still.

"Yes. I've just smacked his face. Oh, do be quick!"

Well, of course, Mr. Chadwick knew why Miss Ledbury smacked young gentlemen's faces, and he most certainly didn't want her to smack any but his own.

"Let me——" he began, pugnaciously.

"No, no, Colin. Only take me away—as fast as you can!"

So Mr. Chadwick uncurled his huge fist, and they both jumped into the Brecknock, and the glass doors parted once more, and out came Mr. Digby, and he said: "Hi!"

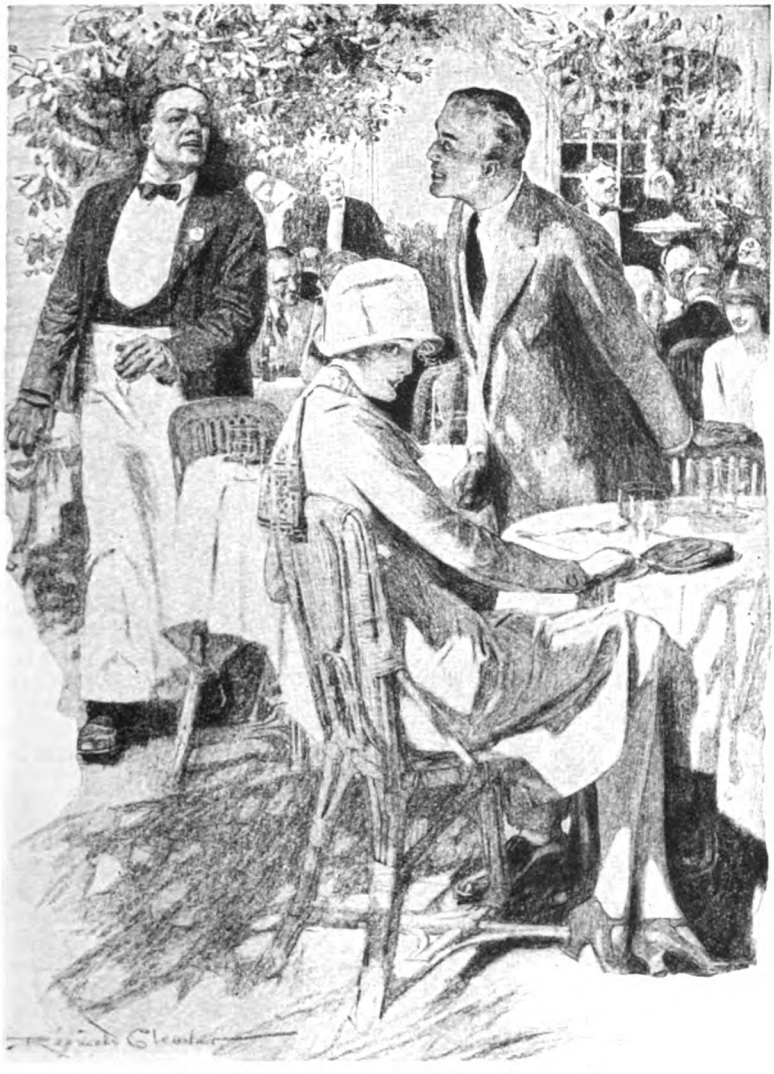
"Quick!" said Miss Ledbury, more urgently than ever.

"Right!" said Mr. Chadwick. "Sit tight!"

Away they went through the Elysian Fields, scattering pedestrians like chaff before the wind. And after them, with his cut-out wide open, roared Mr. Digby in his glittering monster.

They passed the Rond Point with the speedometer needle touching forty. As they shot down the incline beyond the Arc de Triomphe it swung to fifty. But the glittering monster was still hot on their heels, and as they drew near the spot where Alphonse Picard was once more standing with his arms folded, the density of the converging traffic compelled them to drop to under thirty.

And that was how Alphonse Picard managed to see and recognize them. His face lit up. His romantic Latin soul was



"This seems a good table. Garçon!"
"Yes, sair!"
"Look here; we want——"

transported with joy at so satisfactory a sequel to yesterday's tiff and his own deeply sympathetic advice. His dark eyes sparkled in the brilliant sunshine.

"*Aha!*" he yelled, darting forward and brandishing the white truncheon round his head. "*Vive le sport!*"

Mr. Chadwick jerked at the big steering-wheel, grinning his hasty acknowledgments as he missed M. Picard by inches, and rushed on in his mad career. But Mr. Digby, seeing a policeman dancing wildly in his immediate path and waving an hysterical baton in the air, uttered a loud oath and stamped heavily on his four-wheel brakes.

The glittering monster stopped practically in its own length. So did not the two taxis which were immediately behind it. Nor did the six-wheeled omnibus which was approaching rapidly from the left. Nor the tradesman's van and the Isotta-Fraschini which were struggling for precedence on the right. That is to say that they didn't stop intentionally, or in anything resembling the manner recommended by their respective instruction-books.

They just slithered and crunched together in one confused mass of metal, rubber, leather, glass, and bad language. In any other country but France, a large proportion of the six drivers would have been killed on the spot. There was that much consolation for Mr. Digby, as he picked himself—also uninjured—out of the wreckage to face what couldn't possibly be avoided. But he hardly seemed to appreciate his luck.

For of course it is one thing when an old friend of the policeman on point duty collides with a beautiful young woman. But it is altogether another affair when an alien stranger so criminally disregards the first principles of public safety and the rights of harmless French citizens. As Alphonse Picard, terrible now in his embodiment of the incorruptible law, stalks forward to the shouting and gesticulating throng, we may well avert our eyes from the unfortunate Mr. Digby—knowing, as we do, that it will be weeks, if not months or years, before the Republic finishes the work on which it is embarking with such enthusiastic uproar at this moment. The word "reparations" shall yet possess a more sinister significance for that ill-starred individual than it has earned even in the chancelleries of Europe.

SO we leave him there, and swoop down on the Pavillon d'Armononville, where a Brecknock with a damaged running-board plays gooseberry to a young man of powerful physique and a young woman of intoxicating beauty, as they sit out on the greensward and feed on expensive ambrosia. They say all sorts of silly things to each other, but they don't really worry about whether Mr. Chadwick is to play Rugby football after he is married or not. The knowledge has suddenly come to them that a marriage such as theirs cannot fail to swamp any trifle such as this; because it is a bright May morning of warm zephyrs and white chestnut-blossoms, and they are in the fair city of Paris, and in love.

"Hurry up!" cried Miss Ledbury. "Take me somewhere quickly. I've had a row with Eric, and he's looking for me."

"HAMLET" ON THE SCREEN

As it might be adapted by an up-to-date producer

By

COSMO HAMILTON

Illustrated by
E. P. KINSELLA

BEFORE describing what, in all Hollywood probability, would be "Hamlet" if it were to be translated to the screen, let me give a brief and unemotional synopsis of Shakespeare's immortal play.

You will recollect that when the ghost of Hamlet's father walked one cold night on the battlements of his castle of Kronberg at Elsinore he was seen by several sentinels, who, well knowing the young Prince's love and reverence for the deceased King, told him of the circumstance with a certain awe. Deeply moved and resolving "though Hell itself should gape and bid him hold his peace," Hamlet went out and was told by his father's spirit that he had been murdered by Claudius, his brother, so that this unexpected criminal might steal his wife and throne.

Thenceforward, filled with rage and horror, and not for a moment questioning that this was indeed the spirit of his father, Hamlet feigned madness, so that no one might suspect his quickly-made plans for revenge. In order at once to give his mother and the reigning King a proof of his sudden insanity, he wrote a passionate and incoherent letter to the lovely Ophelia, daughter of Polonius, the Lord Chamberlain, which made them believe that the cause of his mental derangement was unrequited love.

At the same time he ordered a company of strolling players to present to the Court a play similar in its incidents to the murder of his father. As Hamlet expected, Claudius was hideously disturbed, showed every sign of guilt, and fled from the scene. And when, during a painful interview with his mother, Hamlet heard someone behind the curtain, whom he took to be his uncle, he killed him in righteous indignation and was appalled to find Polonius at his feet. Seized with remorse at having sent this good but garrulous old man to his death, Hamlet's weakening resolve to avenge his father was strengthened by the appearance of the spirit again.

Whereupon, with a most uneasy conscience, Claudius banished Hamlet, the very sight of whom was more than he could bear. He was sent on a vessel to England, there to be met with orders for his death. Two days out at sea the ship was captured by pirates, who, in the hope of earning the favour of the Court, returned Hamlet to the castle of Elsinore at the moment when Ophelia's funeral was about to take place. The poor maid had lost her sanity from her grief at her father's death at her lover's hands, had wandered to the banks of the stream and fallen into the water.

Broken-hearted, Hamlet leapt into the open grave and there contested for the place of chief mourner with Ophelia's brother. They were separated by the attendants, and later, at the King's cunning instigation, engaged in a supposedly friendly fencing match. But the rapier of Laertes was sharp and poisoned, and to make certain of Hamlet's death the King had prepared a poisoned drink and placed the cup where his nephew would be likely to pick it up in a thirsty moment.

At first Hamlet gained a slight advantage in the duel, but later received a mortal thrust from his opponent's weapon. In the scuffle that followed the weapons were exchanged. Hamlet wounded Laertes with his death-giving rapier. Meantime, desiring to encourage her son and knowing nothing

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of the poisoned drink, the Queen drank to him and died.

And as she passed away Laertes confessed his share in the treachery of which he accused the King. Whereupon, at his last gasp, Hamlet turned upon his uncle, stabbed him with the poisoned weapon, and, having thus avenged his father, fell upon his face.

> Now cracks a noble heart. Good night sweet Prince,
> And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.

LOOKING at the censor with one eye and Lizzie the chewing-gum queen with the other, it is natural to suppose that the director who "felt" that he could make a picture of this stupendous tragedy should be faced with the necessity reluctantly to depart somewhat more widely from the story than he usually does. He would be told by the chief editor of the scenario department that costume plays were not popular at the moment, which would probably make him ask himself why the play had been sent to him. He would himself be able to see, with the censor's list of restrictions in front of him, that murder and sudden death were severely frowned upon. He would immediately, therefore, consult the very young lady who writes his scenarios, the elderly novelist who revises those scenarios, the ex-editor of a popular magazine who rewrites those scenarios, the ex-manipulator of a newspaper column who writes the bright and snappy titles, and the ex-interior decorator who, in collaboration with the ex-architect, designs his sets before making up his mind as to how he should attack the story and when and where he should place it.

It is pretty certain that he would decide to keep a few kings, a queen or two, several crown princes, grand dukes, lord chamberlains, and others of the same kidney, for the reason that they would look well in a medley of uniforms. His pictorial eye would see pomp, pageantry, Crown jewels, an orgy or two, many butlers, a kingdom, and a Court. He would eventually decide, without doubt, with the more or less recent success of "The Prisoner of Zenda" in his memory, upon a mythical kingdom, and he might happily choose such a name for the place as Elsinoria, which would permit him to dress his characters in uniforms which should have about them something of the brassiness of Germany, the plus-four informality of Great Britain, and the delightful waistiness of Italy.

He might even combine all three from time to time in the innumerable changes

(1) The Hamlet of tradition.

(2) Hamlet in "plus-fours."

which Hamlet would necessarily be obliged to make during the course of the picture. And after several minutes of earnest discussion, in which the author could not, in this case, be consulted, as in any other, he would probably devote half an hour or so to the deep study of all the most recent books on psycho-analysis and neo-mentalism. He is vaguely aware of there having been a long series of arguments as to Hamlet's mental condition, and although he will not be bothered to read the play himself, he may think of being tremendously up-to-date by working in a few such fashionable words as inhibition, reaction, complex, and so forth to give his picture tone.

It is pretty certain that he would later forget all this under the rush of ideas to his brain.

In due course the picture emerges. It is called Roy Royland's "Royal Passions." Scenario by Smith, continuity by Brown, decorations by Jones, artistic supervision by Robinson, camera work by Jenkins, titled by Johnson, commas by Roberts, spelling by Dunn, and special music by Samson. By a very curious accident there is no mention of Shakespeare's name.

The landscape peculiarities of Elsinoria are, as it happens, most conveniently like those of Hollywood. There are the same trees, tramcars, cafeterias, fine wide roads crowded with cars, policemen with fluctuating moustaches who, after running very hard for no apparent reason, collide with each other at every corner and fall in heaps; the same beaches upon which numerous obvious beauties interpret the Moonlight Sonata in broad sunlight, the same gorgeous blue sky which makes the most delightful mañana, never disturbed even by the daily dramatic headlines of the local papers or instructions from New York.

(3) Hamlet as we may some day see him on the screen.

We are immediately introduced to the young and sprightly Hamlet, the Crown Prince of Elsinoria, whose enormous roadster winds in and out of the flower-beds which surround the semi-Spanish palace of the King. He is one of those young men who will be young and who insist on sowing patches of wild oats which, in spite of all botanical arguments, have poppy heads. He is, that is to say, naughty but nice, and being a thoroughly modern person is not in the least upset on returning from a little jaunt abroad to find that his uncle, the Grand Duke Claude, has married his mother.

For some reason or other, which everyone has forgotten to explain, he himself has not succeeded to the throne upon the death of his father in the ordinary course of events. It may be, though there is no title to explain it, that he is a Crown Prince who does not want to be a King, who is so up-to-date that he prefers his freedom and likes to kick up his heels among the younger set and dispense as much as possible with the traditional pomp that goes with royalty. Be that as it may, he is a bright, likeable, handsome, irresponsible lad, not even disconcerted when he finds himself, in the first reel, surrounded suddenly with a most alluring bevy of beach maidens in one-piece bathing suits. He carries it off with a light hand and a characteristic smile, jams on his hat at a more than usually rakish angle, and drives to the local Ciro's to Charleston for half an hour before playing the ukulele in the royal orchestra.

Before changing for dinner, however, a matter demanding some consideration because he has a choice of a hundred and sixteen different uniforms, some of which are both naval and military, he is brought up with a round turn by an unexpected event.

A strange woman has been seen hanging about the royal gardens. We know that she is strange because she wears long green jade earrings, a last year's skirt which is long enough just to hide her knees, and a mass of snow-white tulle which floats behind her in

a rather occult way. We suspect something, and, being cinema enthusiasts, we find that our suspicions are perfectly correct. The mysterious lady, who is not as young as she was, manages to evade the thirteen butlers, the small army of footmen, the gold and silver wands, and the whole of the King's body-guard, which seems to consist of eight officers and two sentries. She is found by Hamlet sitting broodily in the smallest room of his private suite, a room which is as cosy as the ballroom of the Waldorf.

Not in the least surprised to see her there, because he is in the habit of giving hospitality to photographers, song writers, jazz players, coloured quartets, racing touts, moneylenders, and such, Hamlet turns on his mechanical piano and lights a cigarette. He is immediately confronted with a huge crystal into which the be-tulled lady then proceeds to gaze.

Hamlet, Crown Prince of Elsinoria, is not disconcerted when he finds himself, in the first reel, surrounded with a most alluring bevy of beach maidens.

Greatly to his surprise and annoyance, our charming friend is then informed that Uncle Claude, the reigning King, has been a very, very bad man. He is told, in fact, that there has been dirty work in Elsinoria, and that Claude, who studied medicine as a hobby, brought about the death of the late King by dropping a handful of pneumonia germs into his morning tea. She sees it in the crystal! Isn't that enough?

Whereupon, having delivered herself of this disconcerting news, she rises, throws the tulle over her shoulders, talks loudly enough to be heard over the mechanical music, and warns Hamlet that it is his duty, come what may, to avenge his father's death.

"The old nut," says Hamlet, in the latest Elsinorian slang. He then shows her to the door, dodging the streaming tulle with the neatness and aptitude of a Charleston dancer.

He likes his Uncle Claudie. He puts up a good game of golf, relieves him of the responsibilities which he does not care to face, lays foundation-stones, attends banquets and Elsinoria Speaking Unions, signs State documents, interviews Labour leaders, and faces all the beastly business of a Court with the utmost cheerfulness. Regarding the mysterious lady as a freak, a fakir, and being an extremely sane young man, sound in wind and limb, Hamlet dismisses the libellous statement from his mind. He is, indeed, more cordial than ever with the King that night at the little family party of sixty which gathers for dinner in the informal dining-room. And we see this little group of amiable persons, wearing undress uniforms with a few of their less important orders, medals, badges, ribbons, and stars, gathering chattily in the foyer, awaiting the arrival of the King and Queen. A beautiful "shot" shows the royal couple approaching in the distance. They are not at first easily discernible, being at least three miles of rooms away. And when finally they arrive, a little weary perhaps

after so long a walk, they have three more acres to cover before seating themselves at a table no larger than a lake. With five men behind each chair and several hundred others placed conveniently in the long-field, so to speak, the dinner is beautifully served. It may be because everyone present is dieting that they are given nothing to eat.

Here, with several subtle touches, is shown the fact that Hamlet is the affectionate object of several ladies of the Bedchamber and the Bath. A camera is tilted beneath the table in order that we may be shown the manœuvrings of several pairs of well-shod feminine feet; and this point is emphasized with even greater taste and delicacy by the fact that the lady on Hamlet's right has her nice plump arm round his neck.

Do not imagine, however, that everything is to be allowed to go as smoothly as all this. The Duke of Polonius, the Lord Chamberlain, who has a way, inherited from a long line of ancestors, of listening in, has overheard the statement of the crystal-gazing lady. He is a politician as well as one of the chief ornaments of the Diplomatic Corps, and is frightfully keen to bring about a match between his daughter, Lady Ophelia, and that nice boy Hamlet, who is very reluctant to depart from bachelorhood. A nice modern touch, this.

Disguised in the uniform of the exemplary hall porter, an amazing cross between that of an admiral, a general, a postman, a station-master, and a fireman, Polonius pays an immediate visit to the green jade lady at the Hotel Splendide. We find her in her rather cramped suite. It consists of a hall as big as a billiard-room, several sitting-rooms as large as Olympia, and a bedroom in which at least six cabarets could be entirely lost. After some search and the use of a large telescope, Polonius discerns his not unwilling hostess lying on the sofa in the south-west sitting-room. Giving her a roll of notes as large and as weighty as the show edition of a motor paper, a little crystal-gazing follows.

The dreadful criminality of the reigning King is confirmed and the advice of the woman immediately sought. She, we find to our immense astonishment, has had a temporary place in Claudie's past. In fact, it was she who looked after his villa at Bellaggio, leaving a perfectly good husband in order to do this thing. And from that moment Polonius sets his political mind to work, and it is he who in fact conceives the cunning scheme of bringing to the palace the highly efficient company from the Theatre Guild of Elsinoria to perform a play written by Sem Benelli, in which a Grand Duke is shown putting pneumonia germs into his brother's cup of tea.

What a chance for pageantry, for vast processions, for fireworks in the park, for

Hamlet is told by the mysterious lady how Uncle Claude, the reigning King, brought about the death of the late King. She sees it in the crystal!

dance movements of vast and exquisitely-dressed officials and "atmosphere," for speciality dances by the Hoffman girls, of twinkling fountains of bathing pools, of Spanish arches, of miles and miles of rooms, of passionate embraces hastily broken, and thousands of moving cars!

And it is during this bewildering evening that, equally to our astonishment, we discover that Hamlet is not the gay and thoughtless lad that we had supposed, but that he is truly and wonderfully in love with the pansy-faced daughter of the door-keeper, who loves him for himself alone. Sadie her name is, and she is played by Bertha Lovely, who lives up to her name. And in the midst of all this royal rioting, over which hangs the sword of Damocles, we follow Hamlet on his long and hasty walk through the palace to the humble cottage under the eucalyptus trees.

The dear, sweet girl is caught just at the moment when in the simplest frock she is ironing her father's socks. A tender and delightful scene follows, in which, with the aid of several poetic titles, we discover that the girl and boy are in the midst of "Old Heidelberg" stuff. Neither of them knows what we know, nor have they any knowledge of the fact, as they sit down together to a snack of scrambled eggs, which Hamlet has gaily broken into the dish, that the reigning King has seen in the performace of the play the discovery of his dastardly deed. Unlike us, they have not seen him go clean off his nut in order that something of the theme of the original story may be followed with a certain faithfulness, or bolt from the palace, so that there may be at this point an epoch-making and entirely original chase through the long, wide streets of Elsinoria into Los Angeles.

Polonius, with a telescope, discovers his hostess in the south-west sitting-room, which is as large as Olympia.

Other things, in addition to King Claude's great big car, in which, as a matter of fact, the green jade lady is sitting beside the chauffeur disguised as an extra man, move very fast from now on. The story gets about. There are nasty and persistent references in the papers to pneumonia germs. The Labour leaders of Elsinoria confer at once. We see them in their committee-room on the top-floor of a skyscraper. Hard-faced men, with jowls. Without bothering about details they declare for revolution. They are convinced that it is quite time for the picture to develop action.

For that and no other reason a river overflows at that moment which buries the doorkeeper's charming little cottage beneath an ugly rush of water. It is here that Hamlet rises to great heights. He not only saves Sadie, who happens to have been caught in the rushing stream, but also the Duke of Polonius, who was hiding in a punt. One of the wings of the palace is set on fire by incendiaries. There is an enormous blaze. The ubiquitous Hamlet, ever on the look-out for gallant deeds, fights his way through the smoke to his erring mother's boudoir and, having brought her into safety, goes back with his melting medals to rescue her favourite dog. During all this the revolutionaries swarm madly about the capital, sweeping the royalist army easily off the map. The two sentries are packed off home to bed and all the officers taken over to stand behind the Labour leader when he is photographed.

The green jade lady, who has a grudge against Claudie, suddenly grasps the wheel of his enormous car, and in spite of the resistance of the chauffeur turns it over an

unguarded cliff. We see the car and its occupants falling, falling, and land finally in a thousand pieces among the rocks, washed by the waves of the Pacific at a spot where the one-piece bathing ladies are in the habit of springing high into the air. Action, action.

Then Hamlet takes control, dressed in a uniform which we have never seen before. The King is dead. The Lord Chamberlain is discredited. The revolution is at its height. The palace is still burning. Long streams of frightened people, carrying their worldly goods, are rushing from the capital. One or two pictures of the world war are neatly patched in here, showing refugees and bursting shells, stumbling soldiers in tin hats, and buildings smashed to bits.

Whereupon, in order that he may be able to marry Sadie and live his own life, Hamlet appoints the best-looking of the Labour leaders—one whose eyes are piercing and whose jaw is square—Dictator of Elsinoria. This brilliant flash of genius has the immediate effect of putting out the fires, turning back the tide, bringing the revolution to an end, and causing the troubled population to return joyfully to their homes. Ophelia, of whom we have seen nothing because, unfortunately, she is not a blonde, becomes engaged to be married to the new Dictator, who, like all Labour leaders, is a snob.

And thus it is that Hamlet, the now plain but gallant Hamlet, leads Sadie to the altar of the village church in a well-cut suit of tweeds. For the first time and the last we see all the bathing beauties dressed in the orthodox garments of bridesmaids. The exemplary doorkeeper gives his daughter away, and the happy pair, dodging handfuls of rice and masses of sweet-peas, mount a bicycle made for two. The simple life for them. And in the final beautiful " shot," after a close-up of two young faces which gives us rather a shock, we see them pedalling through Hollywood to untold happiness and everlasting love.

JACKDAWS

By

AGNES G. HERBERTSON

Illustrated by
F. W. PURVIS

BETSY cocked her pretty head on one side and looked at the hat. Yes, it was shaping rather well. When it was finished it would radiate Bond Street. Cecily would be feverish with joy at getting such a birthday present. " Not much I can do with a needle," thought Betsy, " but I can turn out a hat." She tucked in a scrap of leaf; on second thoughts she broke it off. She bent the brim of the hat this way and that: with each twist of her fingers it became more subtly attractive.

" I say, you there ? " shouted Cecily from the flat above. " Come up here and explore the roof. No end of a rag. And you ought to know how to do it in case of fire."

" Bother fire," said Betsy. She stuck a pin in her mouth and, slanting her bright eyes, stared at the hat sideways.

" What's that you say ? " called Cecily. " Don't you be so uppish. Everyone ought to know how to slip up a steep ladder in a hurry. I'm on. Come along—you."

" Oh, all right, I'm just coming," mumbled Betsy. She took the pin out of her mouth and stuck it through a scarlet petal. She would just sew this flower down neatly and tightly, so that it would look as if it were splashed on to the hat with paint, then she would mount aloft.

That she might not be distracted by any more shouts from Cecily or surprised by a visit from that bright girl she ran and closed the door of the room. Then, casting herself into her chair, she sewed.

" There—that's that," said Betsy with satisfaction. The hat wasn't finished, but all the touches that mattered had been put. She adored the result for a moment, then she hid the hat away. Joyously she cast her workbasket upon a shelf. She mounted the two short flights of stairs that led to the upper flat, the top flat, the flat that was occupied by Cecily.

The trap-door above the landing was open, and the ladder, which was usually laced to a wall in readiness for an emergency, was set against the trap-door. Betsy's hazel eye lighted; not so very long ago she had been climbing every tree in the family orchard. She was up the ladder like a streak, and through the trap-door as if that were the kind of door she was best acquainted with.

" Couldn't have done that better if a fire had been after me," she thought gleefully. Round about the trap-door was rather dirty. She scrambled a few steps, then sat down, blinked at the blue sky above, then looked about her.

The roof had red tiles of rather an odd shape. It seemed to consist of a series of inverted V's, so that one would always be scrambling up or slithering down; perhaps swarming would be the safest method of getting about in these regions. There was no sign of Cecily; no doubt she was on the far side of one of those slopes.

" And if she's wearing that tophole green frock of hers I'm sorry for her," Betsy thought grimly. She regarded with coldness a somewhat naive decorative design upon her stockings; this roof was simply filthy. She would tell Cecily so.

BUT Cecily wasn't on the other side of the slope. Betsy clambered to the top of a ridge, adjusted herself there, and looked about. No sign of Cecily. Obviously she had quickly tired of her exploration, or had tired of waiting for Betsy, and had gone back to her domain.

" And I was only a minute, anyway," grumbled Betsy.

She shouted " Cecily ! " but knew she could not be heard.

Then, in a casual way, pausing once or twice to look about her, she made her way back to the trap-door to call her pal.

Having reached it she sat back a little bit blankly and frowned. The trap-door was closed.

Betsy set to work upon it in a neat thorough, and concentrated way. She had soon proved to her complete conviction, if not satisfaction, that the door to the roof was rightly closed, adjusted, and fastened. No doubt the ladder clung unctuously to its wall.

"Cecily!" Betsy bawled, setting her face close to the trap-door. And "Cecily!" she shouted again.

There was never a sound.

She sat back a little bit blankly and frowned. The trap-door was closed.

Betsy leant back against a slope and looked at the watch on her arm. She frowned, then she laughed. "Serves me right," she said. Then she gazed thoughtfully at the sky.

What had happened was clear enough; Cecily, unaware of her presence on the roof, had tidied up the door and ladder and gone off to the art class she always attended on Monday mornings. Betsy's nimble and silent climb to the roof had not betrayed her to Cecily. Moreover, she—Betsy—had sewed on for half an hour instead of a minute or two. Also it was quite likely Cecily had not heard her reluctant consent to explore, and believed she was hard at it copying out that beastly music, and not to be disturbed.

A survey of the sky did not offer any way of escape. It was growing a bit misty.

"Lovely if a fog came on!" murmured Betsy. She laughed. Then she gave a little shiver. This wasn't sitting-on-roofs weather.

"Must do something," she thought. But what? She considered.

She could think of no way of return to the house she had left. Its lower floors were let as offices. Its two upper floors made a maisonnette, cut off from the remainder of the house by a locked door, and shared by Cecily and herself. Only Cecily could enter the maisonnette, and Cecily was off to the Art School.

"But there must be some way of leaving this roof," Betsy thought, with a gleam in her eye, "or it wouldn't be much of an escape from fire."

She was right. There were ways of leaving it. On the left, for instance, one could pass on to the next roof, which was on the same level and no doubt served by a trap-door, and from that to the next, and so on. But she would still be "on the roof."

" A grubby sparrow," she said to herself. " No, a blackbird, a regular raven." She glanced at her pretty jumper suit, already plentifully patterned with smudges.

No, her explorations would not take that direction. To the right matters were more promising. The second house in that direction was a good deal lower. Betsy pushed a curl behind her ear and set off to see what was to be seen.

Yes, this house had had additions built to it, and it possessed not a roof but roofs. These were on different levels. If she could bring herself to risk the descent which would give her the run of the first, she could with comparative ease make her way to another and still lower roof, above which was a window quite possible of access ; indeed, the owner of the window seemed to have set a pot-plant or two of a somewhat melancholy description upon the roof.

An impish smile showed Betsy's neat, even teeth. " Enter a little bird," she said.

It *was* rather a drop. Betsy scrubbled her toes against the wall, seeking for some kind of foothold, then let go and slithered down. She landed lightly, but with a grazed knee. Betsy examined this, tied her handkerchief about the wound, then glanced round.

She was at the back of the houses. Around her a forest of chimney-pots approached the sky. There were signs of life ; somewhere someone banging happily on a piano. But from no window did a watcher peer forth.

" Might live and die out here, and nobody would trouble," commented Betsy, with only herself as hearer. She gave herself a shake, looked at her toes—they were coming through the maltreated leather of her slippers—then stole close to the window which had been her objective. Her height was good enough to enable her to look through without difficulty. Curtains of a soft pinkish purple hung at each side of the window. Betsy stationed herself so that she might be hidden by one of these, then she peered round it into the room.

THE window was closed and the pane wasn't particularly clean. Betsy at first could make out nothing, then she started.

A young man was in the room and standing so close to the window that he gave her quite a shock. He wore a rather shabby suit of a soft grey colour, and his hair, which hesitated over being red, was rumply and rather long. He was stooping slightly over something on a table, and was frowning. The frown gave his face quite a devilish look, Betsy thought. He looked, she told herself, as if he didn't care tuppence about anything but the thing he was staring at. Betsy could not see clearly what that was, for a high-backed chair got in the way, but she distinctly caught a bright glint as of silver.

Must be something frightfully interesting, she told herself, to make an otherwise lazy-looking young man look eaten-up with interest like that. She craned a little, forgetting all about nice manners, that she might see the better and get eaten-up with interest too. Over went a flower-pot, making not a dreadful row, but still some. The young man swung round like a flash. Betsy involuntarily ducked.

The window was thrown up. The young man looked out. He evidently wasn't a talkative young man. Not a word did he say. Actions speak, however. Hard, strong fingers caught Betsy under the arms ; she was raised up, in a second was in the room.

The young man certainly set her upon the floor with a jerk. Betsy, appearing distinctly dazed, thought of each individual tooth and wondered if it were in its place. The young man shut the window quickly and silently. Then he wheeled round upon Betsy, interrupting her in her meditations and flinging at her a stare full of rage and suspicion.

" How long have you been there ? " he demanded.

" N-not long," said Betsy, " though it seemed years and years."

" Indeed ! " sneered the young man. " Well, I'm willing to believe it wasn't years and years. But I'd like to know *just* how long you have been spying."

Betsy's little vivid face coloured violently. " Spying ! " she echoed. " I wasn't spying. I only just looked in. Then I saw you staring—like that. And I did wonder what you were staring at. But I shouldn't have looked in at all if—if I hadn't wanted to get off the roof."

" H'm ! " said the young man in an unbelieving and hateful tone. " You spend your days, I suppose, climbing on and off roofs ? "

" No, I don't," Betsy said, crossly. " But if somebody goes and shuts the trap-door and you can't get back you have to do something."

" I suppose," the young man said, contemptuously, " you have some kind of a story ready. Made it up before you started, no doubt, in case you got caught. Well, I'll be nice to you ; I'll let you have time to think it over and polish it up a bit while I find out just exactly how much you could see when you were spying."

Spying ! That hateful word. Betsy hated it all the more because a horrid little twinge in her conscience accused her. She *had*

"I hate tying up a girl. If you'll give me your word of honour not to move, that'll do," he said.

tried to get a better look at what lay on the table. As she so reflected her eyes wandered to the table. Whatever was upon it was carefully concealed by a thick green cloth; the young man must have swept it over before seizing her in that lightning flash.

"Yes," the young man said, cuttingly, "you would like to have a close look at it, wouldn't you? But that scheme isn't coming off. Now, I don't mean to hurt you—I don't hurt girls—but I am going to tie you up for a minute while I look outside. Please sit down."

Betsy set a hand on the chair, which stood between the table and the window. "No, you don't!" said the young man quickly. He drew her with no loving hand toward a little strong chair by the wall, dumped her into it. Then he hesitated. "I hate tying up a girl. If you'll give me your word of honour not to move, that'll do," he said.

"I don't particularly want to move—except to go home," said Betsy.

She turned her hazel eyes upon the young man. They were quite singularly honest, frank eyes, besides being more than a trifle winning.

"I wish," the young man said in a really grieved tone, "you wouldn't keep on telling me all kinds of lies."

"Lies!" cried Betsy, indignantly.

But the young man only said: "Have I your word of honour that you don't move from this chair?"

"Oh, all right," said Betsy.

She wondered if the young man were mad. Or was he up to something he shouldn't be? Or——

His movements now were quite easy to understand. He opened the window, slid his long legs over the sill, stationed himself where Betsy had been, crumpled himself till he was about her height, then set himself to discover how much he could see of what lay on the table.

"I was standing more to the left," said Betsy, with a touch of bravado.

But the young man, having closed the window, couldn't hear. However, he shifted his view-point about a dozen times, and having stared this way and that—all the time closely attentive, Betsy felt, to her own movements—he seemed to know all he wanted to know. Slithering deftly into the room, he shut the window with a final air.

He turned a chair round and sat down, facing Betsy.

"No doubt you would prefer to go back the way you have come," he said, "but I have objections. Tell me where you have concealed your—er—hat and coat, or whatever you were wearing, and I will go and fetch them for you." He paused, then added, "I will then trouble you to leave in ordinary fashion by the front door."

"Nothing I should like better," Betsy said, fervently, "although I haven't my latchkey with me. As for my hat and coat, you don't exactly dress up when you mount to explore your own roof."

" Perhaps not," said the young man in an unpleasant tone. " Still, if you'll tell me, where they are, I'll fetch 'em for you. I don't want to hurt you, but I don't mind telling you, if I run into any more of the gang—any male members of it—I sha'n't exactly whisper words of love."

" There aren't any male members," Betsy said, wearily. " There isn't any gang. You do seem to be quite mad. I wonder what you have been up to that you should have such horrid ideas? As for whispering words of love, I can't imagine you whispering words of love to *anybody*."

" I can see that you are bent on telling me some hatched-up story," said the young man with disgust. " Oh, all right, fire away. But I must say I am surprised that a girl like you should lend herself to a mean plot like——"

" There you go again! " said Betsy. Suddenly she laughed. The situation *was* funny. And her instinct told her that this young man, whether mad or infamous, would not damage her.

THE young man said nothing, merely waited. With a little sigh—for everything about her listener shouted unbelief—Betsy began to relate her adventure. The story sounded, she rather realized, a trifle lame; but it is difficult—Betsy discovered—to tell the truth convincingly if somebody else believes it a lie.

" So you live two doors down the street, *you say*," commented the young man. " Funny I should never have seen you."

" People don't see each other—in London—if their hours don't fit," Betsy said, huffily. She added, " Perhaps you haven't been here very long? "

" No doubt you know I haven't been," the young man said.

" I don't know anything about you," Betsy said, angrily, " except that you are the most hateful young man I have ever met."

The young man looked at her reflectively " I need hardly tell you that I don't believe this very far-fetched story," he said; " still, I—I rather like you, and I am sorry about it all." He paused, then went on: " I can see that a girl like you might get led astray by others just through her love of adventure. You don't seem to mean any harm. Probably you don't realize what all this—this—er—chance means to me. You make me think of a mischievous jackdaw. You *are* rather like a jackdaw, you know, your clothes all grubby and ruffled as they are, and——"

" What I so like about you," Betsy said, in the most disagreeable tone she had so far used, " is your turn for compliments. I am quite embarrassed by the rich profusion of them."

Her companion considered that. " I suppose you are annoyed," he said at length; " and, of course, I have no wish to annoy you." He paused again, then went on: " You—er—tell me your friend has gone to a class, and that you have not your latch-key." He was stopped by an impatient movement from Betsy, waited for her to speak, and, when she merely shrugged her shoulders, went on: " So you are—er—at liberty to stay a minute or two longer and have a cup of coffee with me. Or would you prefer chocolate? "

Betsy said, nastily, " It won't be drugged, I suppose? "

Her host appeared to be really taken aback and distressed. " You can't suppose that I am capable——"

" Well, you seem to think *me* capable of a few things, don't you? " Betsy broke in.

" H'm! " said the young man. He sighed. " Well, let us say that I—er—believe your story."

Betsy laughed, a whole-hearted ringing laugh. It seemed to perplex the young man: his brow wrinkled.

" I'll have chocolate, please," said Betsy; " and I like it sweet."

" You'll like it as you get it," said he, in rather a domineering way. " I know only one way of making it."

" Then I think I'll help you," said Betsy.

" If you are—er—particular, it might be as well," said he.

He rose and in a quiet way, his back to Betsy, lifted the hidden object on the table, its wrapping still round it, carried it to a stout cupboard in a niche of the room, and locked it up.

" Oh, dear! " said Betsy, sighing.

FROM an inner room he brought a spirit stove, a small silver jug, and one or two articles on a tray.

They made chocolate.

The young man seemed to have travelled extensively, and he could talk about his travels in an interesting way without being ponderous. Betsy, as she listened, found herself touched by regret. If only this young man were really a pal, how pleasant life would be! And how she would swank over the palship! Cecily had crowds of friends; young men were always turning up from the Art School, drinking tea and ragging Cecily. Betsy, as secretary to a somewhat eccentric musician, trod a lonely road. She had once or twice wished that *she* could produce a young man at their various tea or coffee parties. And then a daring idea came to her.

" I say," she began. Her hazel eyes

lighted with a gleam of mischief. " I have an idea."

The young man regarded her thoughtfully. " You are, I should say," he said, " a girl of many ideas. That's what is so dangerous——"

" Well, this idea isn't dangerous," Betsy said, tartly. " It's quite an ordinary idea, really. I want you to come to tea, to tea with Cecily and me. Then—then you can see for yourself—well, that what I have told you is true."

The young man smiled, not a bit a nice smile, though he had been talking in the most natural fashion a minute earlier.

That smile annoyed Betsy. " There isn't any danger," she said ; and she, too, smiled nastily.

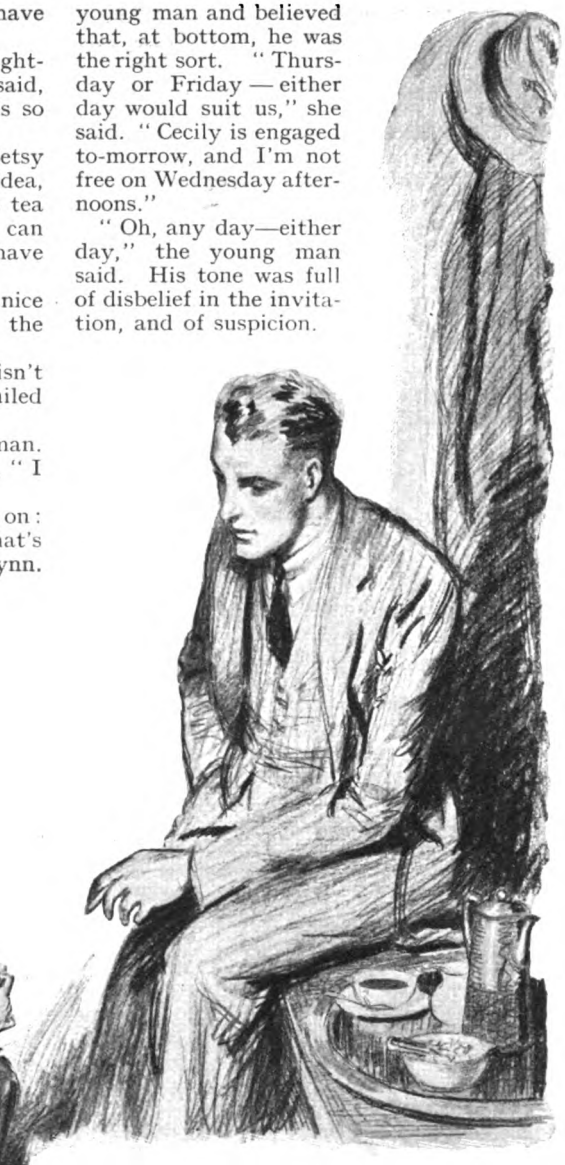
" Oh, of course not," said the young man. He said politely, but his tone was cold, " I shall be delighted to come."

" That's nice," said Betsy. She went on : " You ring the top bell but one, that's mine. You'll see my name by it : E. Lynn. ' E ' is for Elizabeth."

" I see. It's a charming name," said the young man, still politely.

Betsy would rather have him rude ; but, rude or polite, she liked this extraordinary young man and believed that, at bottom, he was the right sort. " Thursday or Friday — either day would suit us," she said. " Cecily is engaged to-morrow, and I'm not free on Wednesday afternoons."

" Oh, any day—either day," the young man said. His tone was full of disbelief in the invitation, and of suspicion.



If only this young man were really a pal, how pleasant life would be !

" We'll say Thursday, then," she said, cheerfully. " Thursday about four. You'll like Cecily—everybody does."

" I'm sure I shall," said the young man. He added evenly, " I sha'n't—er—bring my treasure with me, you know ; it's a trifle large for that. As a matter of fact, I shall have disposed of it long before then."

" Drop it into the sea, if you like," Betsy said, crossly.

The young man opened his eyes wide.

They were keen blue eyes, which Betsy suspected *could* be soft and kind, though she knew them as quite otherwise.

" And that," he said, " is rather hurrying matters."

" I don't understand you," said poor Betsy. She added, " You might as well tell me your name, so that I can tell Cecily."

The young man sighed wearily. " It's just the same," he said. " *I* don't go in for chopping and changing. Jeremy Pryde does quite well."

Betsy screwed up her nose. " Is it your real name ? " she asked, unpleasantly.

" Now, what do you think ? " said the young man.

The question was left unanswered.

Betsy thought she must go. The young man showed her downstairs, through a region that struck her as being not too clean, desolate, and uninhabited.

" Good-bye till Thursday, then," said Betsy.

The young man said " Good-bye."

He closed the door immediately after her. Betsy was acutely aware that he did not bother to notice her direction as she moved away.

WOULD he appear on Thursday ? Betsy doubted it. Still, she had better tell Cecily of his possible appearance in case he did appear. On a sudden impulse she decided to keep her adventure to herself. She would tell Cecily merely that a friend, a Jeremy Pryde, might come to tea.

She slipped upstairs and seated herself by the maisonnette door to await Cecily's arrival with a key. She would soon be due.

Cecily came back rather early, in fact; often she shopped on her way home. Betsy heard her voice on the lower stair ; she was talking to Mr. Belter, the dealer in antiques on the ground floor. Then Cecily ascended.

" Hullo ! " She grinned cheerfully at sight of Betsy sitting on the stair. " Been to the post without your key again ? "

She slipped her key into the door and opened it. " I haven't waited long, anyway," said Betsy.

" You didn't explore the roof, lazy thing," grumbled Cecily.

" That's all you know about it," said Betsy. She wanted to talk that Cecily might not notice her dishevelled appearance.

" Well, you were very quiet about it. I didn't hear you go up nor come down," said Cecily.

" Oh, it's quite an easy climb," murmured Betsy, and vanished in at her sitting-room door.

" Oh, hi, wait a minute ! I want to tell you a bit of news," said Cecily. She put her head round the door.

Betsy was scrambling into an overall. She sat down and tucked her feet under her chair. "I'm going to make an omelette," she muttered.

" You're always making omelettes," said Cecily. " Wonder you don't get sick of them. I say, you heard me talking to Grandpapa on the ground floor ? " She paused impressively.

" I did," said Betsy, fastening her overall.

" Well, there's great news," Cecily said, importantly. " We've had a robbery in our neighbourhood, just a door or two down, that corner house, on the opposite side. They're keeping quiet while the police rootle about, but Grandpapa knows all about it. You know the house—the Hon. Mrs. Somebody or other's ? "

Betsy nodded.

" Somebody paid it a visit on Sunday night while everybody, more or less, was at church. Just the one thing of value has been stolen—an Italian vase, of silver, and umpteen years old, worth pots of money. It was in the safe, and the thieves seem to have known all about it and gone straight for it. Grandpapa says it may be the work of one clever thief, or of a gang."

" Or of both," murmured Betsy. She was staring in front of her.

" Of both ? " questioned Cecily, opening her eyes wide.

" P'r'aps one thief stole it, and a gang watched him and tried to steal it from him," said Betsy. " Only he was clever, and wouldn't let them."

" Oh, if you want to make up a story about it ! " laughed Cecily.

" I wonder," Betsy said, slowly, " if they'll catch the thief ? "

" Sure to," said Cecily. She ran upstairs whistling.

Betsy made her omelette absent-mindedly. She ate it in the same absent-minded fashion, which was perhaps fortunate. Her brain was teeming with recollections, speculations, fears. All these revolved about the figure of an almost red-haired young man. He had professed to suspect her ; was he himself the object of suspicion ? Was he the thief the police were tracking ? Had he stolen the silver vase from the safe of the Hon. Mrs. Cremarty, and was that the shining object which had lain upon his table ? He expected to have " disposed " of it before Thursday or Friday !

And he had dared to treat her—Betsy—as if she had been " up to " something discreditable ! Betsy's heart glowed. Alas, it did not help her out of her perplexities ; for at one moment it glowed with indignation against, and at another in pity for, that extraordinary young man.

THAT afternoon was one of secretarial duty. Neatly dressed in a jumper suit that admirably matched her hair, and with irreproachable shoes and stockings, Betsy set out. On her golden-brown curls a minx of a hat nodded at the world, on her cheeks was a becoming flush.

She glanced back at the house from which the silver treasure had been stolen; and a dreadful thought came to her. Was the street being watched by detectives, dreadful creatures disguised as ordinary men? She glanced about. As it chanced, there was not a man in the street. Betsy sighed with relief. Really, she was growing to have quite a—a *motherly* interest in that young man. She believed that he could not long have been engaged in crime. Perhaps he had been merely led astray by a love of adventure, was the tool of men more unscrupulous than he.

As she passed the door from which he had so expeditiously ushered her she glanced at it. There were only two bells at its side. One belonged to an upholstering and renovating firm; by the other was a neat, new-looking brass plate. Betsy's hazel eyes scanned it in a flash. Yes, the name on it had certainly been "Pryde," probably "J. Pryde." Still, that told nothing that was satisfying; the young man might be occupying surreptitiously the rooms of an absent Mr. Jeremy Pryde. Even if he were Jeremy Pryde, he might still be the man the police were after.

Betsy shivered.

As she typed her employer's letters that afternoon she told herself that Mr. Jeremy Pryde would *not* come to tea on Thursday afternoon; why, of course he wouldn't come.

Yet, when later on the musician offered her two tickets for a rather good concert on the same afternoon, she refused them. "I have a friend coming to tea," she said.

She looked at the house again on her way home. The upholstering firm evidently had offices on the ground floor, and used the floor above and yet another for storing purposes. So the general desolation was explained.

ON Tuesday morning Cecily said, "Grandpapa has shut up, horrid man; but I believe they have a *clue*."

Betsy was writing a letter. She said, "Oh, dear!" and made a blot.

"Goodness," said Cecily, "don't you want them to catch the thief?"

Betsy considered, digging her pen into her blotting paper. "Oh, I don't know. I feel a bit sorry for him," she said.

"*I*," said Cecily, loftily, "feel sorry for the Mrs. Somebody who has lost her gorgeous vase. How would *you* like to lose something you just adored? By the way, although we haven't anything worth stealing, I think we'd better not go prospecting about the roof for a bit; we might forget and leave the trap-door open."

Betsy reddened. She said quickly, "I don't want ever to go on that horrid old roof again!"

"I suppose that was where you damaged your knee," said Cecily, wisely. "Well, I'm off. By the way, I've got a girl and one or two *very* nice boys coming to tea on Thursday, so see that you keep that day free."

"I may have a friend—quite a dear thing—coming myself," said Betsy. "He said he might look in on me. So we can join forces."

"Oh, how nice! What does he do? A musician?" asked Cecily.

Betsy hesitated. "Oh, he's *very* clever," she said, vaguely.

Fortunately at that moment Cecily's bell rang.

THAT evening Betsy sat down and wrote a letter; the first and last anonymous letter of a bright career. She had had a horrid day thinking of that young man. There *was* something rather nice about him, and he was meant for better things. She had tried to get her courage up to going to his door and trying to see him; but had told herself eventually that by doing so she might give him away.

So she wrote—and as follows:—

"*They* have a clue and are after you. Do be careful. Why not put it back? You would be happier leading an honest life. —A WELLWISHER."

After a moment's consideration she stroked out "honest" and inserted "ordinary." (No use hurting the poor dear's feelings.) Then she typed the letter, typed an envelope to "Mr. Jeremy Pryde," and, after gazing at the street from her front window, ran downstairs and to the pillar-box at the corner, and posted it.

He would receive the letter on Wednesday morning; she hoped that would be in time.

As she hurried away from the pillar-box she ran into him, emerging from his door. He held a letter in his hand. He pushed this into the pillar, then caught her by the arm. "It *is* you," he said.

She was wearing a hat, for a slight drizzle was falling; but her face with its fearless eyes was not hidden.

"I've been rather wanting to see you," the young man said. He walked along, still touching her arm. "I've been thinking about you," he went on, "and it occurred to me that perhaps you were not—were not in the business I thought you were mixed up in."

As she hurried away from the pillar-box she ran into him. He caught her by the arm. "It *is* you," he said.

Betsy began an indignant denial, but he motioned her to silence and went on: "Perhaps you are in this other business—about the vase—they say there is a woman confederate. If so, let me urge you, *get out of it*, keep clear of it. Things are being kept quiet, but the police have a clue. I don't know why it is, but I should hate you to be jumped on, to be mixed up with a lot of scoundrels, a police-court business——"

Betsy pushed his arm away. She flashed a glance at him. Then her mouth trembled. She began, almost in an hysterical way, to laugh.

"Hush!" said the young man, looking round.

Betsy broke from him. "Come to tea on Thursday, don't forget," she cried. Then, still laughing, she made for her door.

The young man stood where she had left him, staring after her.

"Anyhow, he has seen me go in at the right door," thought Betsy as she flew up the stair.

Arrived at her own rooms she laughed again.

On Wednesday it occurred to her that it might not be fair to let Cecily in for the young man's company if there were any doubt about him without letting her know what she was in for.

She told Cecily, therefore, the story of Monday morning's escapade; indeed, she told her everything.

"I'm not sure that you ought to have sent that letter," said Cecily. "Thieves *ought* to be caught, that's what *I* think."

"But p'r'aps he isn't," objected Betsy. "He seemed to think *I* was mixed up in stealing the vase."

"Oh, I expect he pretended that to throw you off the scent," said Cecily, comfortably. She added, "I expect he stole the vase all right; but after all, if he does turn up, it doesn't matter much. There is nothing here worth stealing. And we'll have Ronnie, and Jack, and Sidney to help us, besides the girls. Why, I think it will be quite thrilling."

But Betsy didn't seem to be thrilled.

"Oh, cheer up, he won't come," said Cecily.

THURSDAY came.

Betsy went out and bought some special cakes as her contribution to the feast. Cecily also went out. When she came back she said, "They've caught the men who stole that vase—there were two of them. So that man won't turn up this afternoon. I expect you're really relieved; I'm sure I am."

Betsy stiffened herself. "Yes, I'm awfully glad," she said.

But, when Cecily had vanished, Betsy hid the cakes in a cupboard and then wept.

The tea-party was in Cecily's sitting-room. Everybody had appeared and things generally were rather festive when a bell rang—Betsy's bell.

"Afternoon's post, I expect," said Cecily.

One of the young men made for the door.

But Betsy had got there first, and ran downstairs.

Course it wouldn't be that man—still, you never knew.

He was standing on the doorstep, wearing the same shabby suit, but looking surprisingly buoyant and happy.

Betsy caught her breath. Then she said, "You see I do live here."

"'Spose so," said the young man, and laughed.

As they reached the maisonnette Betsy explained that the party was in Cecily's flat.

"And which flat is yours?" asked Jeremy Pryde.

Betsy told him as they reached it.

"Let us turn in there for a moment," he said. "I—er—I want to explain."

They turned into her sitting-room. Betsy cast herself into a chair, the young man stood by the mantel. He looked round. Then he said, "I've sold that invention of mine. It's settled. The people have it now. So that anxiety is removed."

"Invention?" echoed Betsy.

The young man nodded. He went on in an apologetic way: "I thought you were on the track of it, spying, you know. Some people *were* after it, trying to find out—— Well, you wouldn't understand without a lot of explanation. I'll tell you all about it some day."

"So that thing on your table, that shining thing, was an invention?" Betsy said, slowly. Then she laughed. She looked at the young man mischievously. "I kept on telling you I wasn't spying on you," she told him.

"Yes, I know. But people *had* been spying, and I thought you were just another of the gang. They'd invented something a bit the same, I think, but not quite. The invention has to do with boats." The young man looked at Betsy as he made this explanation. She was good to look at. Her hair shone smoothly round the top of her head and broke into little curls round her ears. He added, "Can't think how I came to be such an ass as to suspect you."

Betsy rubbed the tip of one dainty shoe along the carpet. "Oh, well, I looked rather disreputable—a regular jackdaw," she admitted.

"That's true," said Jeremy, and cheered up.

" And afterwards, when I looked *quite* respectable," said Betsy, with a reproving glance, " you took me for a *thief*."

" Oh, well, we may cry quits over that," Jeremy Pryde told her. " That letter of warning, I imagine "—he chuckled at the remembrance—" came from you."

Betsy's heightened colour gave her away.

" Kind of you to warn me," said Jeremy, thoughtfully.

" Same to you," retorted Betsy.

" And are you convinced that I am not the thief ? " he asked her.

Betsy nodded. " You see, they have been caught—both of them, " she said.

That knocked some modesty into him. The young man looked quite downcast.

" And are you satisfied that I am not really—a jackdaw ? " Betsy asked, a gleam in her hazel eye.

Jeremy said, " You never mentioned that you were secretary to Pounders. I saw you coming away from his place yesterday. He's a relation of mine. I looked in and made a few discreet inquiries."

" I always thought," Betsy said, soberly, " that I looked honest."

" But you do, you do," said Jeremy, hastily. He added, "As honest as—as I am."

Their eyes met. They burst out laughing. They laughed till they ached, till the tears stood in their eyes.

" And all the time," said Jeremy at length, " I wanted to be friends."

He believed it.

" So did I," said Betsy.

" I have a kind of idea," Jeremy Pryde said, slowly, " that we might become rather specially friendly. I have an idea that we might——"

At that moment Cecily shouted over the banister.

" Are you *ever* coming upstairs ? " she asked.

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 162.

(*The Second of the Series.*)

GOOD-BYE, dear former, soon you must away,
Time his relentless course declines to stay.
Welcome, dear latter, come our land to cheer,
Whisper that brighter days will soon be here.

1. Eight sides it has, time past within it shows.
2. Right across France, into the Bay it flows.
3. With pictures, teeth, and corks it is concerned.
4. The day once vanished never has returned.
5. A quadruped, spelled either way the same.
6. Candied, a plant, also a maiden's name.
7. Like moon or planet, it goes round and round,
   And a most useful weapon may be found.

REMUS.

Answers to Acrostic No. 162 *should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor,* THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on January* 11*th.*

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 161.

GOOD wishes, kind expressions, words of cheer,
Heard at this merry season of the year.

1. A fish and ancient dynasty avail
   To make delightful Prince of fairy tale.
2. Shelter for ships ; were it to lose its head,
   A garden shelter it would be instead.
3. To perforate all over, a large sieve,
   The sort of question that a Sphinx might give.
4. To welcome it keen skaters will not fail ;
   It would be nicer with a head and tail.
5. Quick ! Bird in England in the summer seen,
   The surname of a very witty Dean.
6. Here is a land from which, beyond a doubt,
   The poor Conservative has been turned out.
7. Filled with a song, in Sherwood Forest green
   The maid beloved by Robin Hood is seen.
8. This almost wholly by a chin is made,
   But such a tooth requires a dentist's aid.
9. Should there be four ? Ask batsmen. True, 'tis tame
   That, when they're drawn, so, often, is the game.

BOODLEBAR.

1. C	h a r m i n	G
2. H	a r b o u	R
3. R	i d d l	E
4. I	c	E
5. S	w i f	T
6. T	e r r	I
7. M	a r i a	N
8. A	c h i n	G
9. S	t u m p	S

NOTES.—Light 2. Harbour, arbour. 6. Territory. 7. Aria.

ACROSTIC No. 159.—Reference to many books seems to show uncertainties in both the published answer to the sixth light and the alternatives suggested ; all answers are therefore accepted. For the seventh light, " Red," " Ruddied," and " Rosy-cheeked " are admitted.

The Voice That Said "Good-night"

by

ROLAND PERTWEE

Illustrated by
CONRAD LEIGH

ELSIE, the under-housemaid at Number 17a, Seymour Gardens, Hyde Park, found the body when she came down to do the grates in the morning.

That Philip Gaylor should have been sitting, apparently asleep, in his arm-chair, with a reading lamp at his elbow and the heavy curtains drawn, was not without precedent. Mr. Gaylor was an indifferent sleeper and often remained in his study until four or five in the morning.

Finding her master in the room, Elsie made to retire, but, mindful how he bullied his staff for any neglect of duty, she summoned her courage and, tiptoeing across the heavy pile carpet, went down on her knees, cleaned and blackleaded the grate, and relaid the fire. The while she reflected what a nasty old man he was.

Mr. Gaylor slept on—undisturbed.

Still moving quietly, Elsie drew the curtains and admitted the pale light of morning. While recrossing towards the door she became aware of something strained in her master's attitude. The head did not sit naturally on the shoulders—it poked sideways.

Elsie stretched out her hand to turn off the lamp, and as she did so the silence and the coldness of death crept in a wave towards her.

Elsie screamed twice and fled with fingers tangled in her hair. On the kitchen floor the scream articulated into a name.

"Mr. Beldon! Mr. Beldon!"

Beldon, the butler, came from his bedroom, which adjoined the servants' hall. There was a razor in his hand. One half of his face was shaved and the other was not. He wore a pyjama coat and a pair of black trousers with the braces looped over his hips.

Elsie screamed again, and he said:—

"My good girl, control yourself."

Came then Mrs. Beldon, the cook, in a print dressing-gown, and with curl papers in her hair. She said:—

"Stop it! You'll wake the master. Give over, do."

Then said Elsie, with shivering lips and eyes abulge:—

"He'll never wake again. Oh—oh—oh-h! He's there—sitting there in his study—dead as a corpse—and I done the grate and never knew it."

"Girl's mad," said Mr. Beldon. But he put down the razor because his hand was trembling. "I'll step upstairs and see."

Tucking in his pyjamas, he took a coat from the chair-back and donned it.

"Wipe the soap off your face, Beldon," his wife admonished. "He's that particular."

"He'll never be partickler again," wailed Elsie, as Mr. Beldon, smearing his cheek with a glass-cloth, hurried past her to the stairs.

On the half-landing above the hall was the door of the study, slightly ajar.

Mr. Beldon rapped with his knuckles.

"Sir," said he.

Silence answered him, and a faint odour as of a mortuary.

Mr. Beldon set his teeth and walked in.

In the leather arm-chair, his back towards the butler, was Mr. Gaylor. Mr. Gaylor's lumpy hands lay along the elbow-rests. Mr. Gaylor's head was craned sideways About his neck, drawn so tight as to have

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disappeared into the heavy folds of flesh, was twisted a length of wire with wooden holders at either end. Mr. Gaylor had been garrotted with a grocer's cheese-cutter. On the under side of the jaw was a small black bruise. There was no suggestion of any disturbance having taken place. Books and papers were in their accustomed order. The writing-table, the chairs, the telephone, the gramophone, small pieces of incidental furniture were exactly as they had been when, the previous night, Mr. Beldon brought in the tray of drinks, and had seen his master alive for the last time.

Being a man of intelligence, he did not move anything. He stood just inside the room and looked. That was all. There was no need to touch the body to realize that life was extinct. The putty-coloured hands and the grey face told their own tale.

Removing the key, Mr. Beldon stepped from the room and locked the door on the outside.

A FRIGHTENED knot of servants had gathered in the hall below.

Mr. Beldon came downstairs slowly, wiping the corners of his mouth with the glass-cloth. All his life he had made a study of imperturbability, and here was the moment to prove his perfection.

A rustle of horrified whispers greeted him —frightened inquiries.

"What's happened—what is it?" Like dried leaves, wind blown, they sounded.

He addressed his wife.

"Please to superintend the lowering of the blinds in the front of the house."

"Oh-h! Then it's true?"

"Fred." This to the boot-boy. "Slip up the Square and find a constable."

The boy was gone like a shot, only pausing to struggle with the front-door bolts.

"Elsie, my girl, you'd better lie down. The rest of you return to the kitchen."

He waited in the hall until his orders were obeyed, then unlocked the dining-room door and, entering, drank a glass of neat brandy—Courvoisier '98.

Presently the front-door bell rang.

Fred and a policeman were on the steps.

When he found that it was a murder case the policeman rang up the Station.

In the room above he remarked:—

"Better not touch nothin', but 'e's gorn right enough."

THE Divisional Surgeon and Detective-Inspector Lavery arrived together in a taxi. They were closeted in the study for a quarter of an hour before sending for Beldon.

"Did you find the body?" the detective asked.

Mr. Beldon shook his head.

"It was found by the girl Elsie."

"Ah! Nothing been touched?"

"Except the grate, sir, nothing. Elsie did the grate and drew the curtains before recognizing what had happened."

"Eh? Eh? Eh?" said the Divisional Surgeon, incredulously.

"It was not unheard of for the master to fall asleep in this chair, sir, and with that pink-shaded lamp she wouldn't have noticed his funny colour."

"An observer," said Lavery, cocking an eyebrow.

"Noticing is part of a butler's duties, sir."

"Later we'll find out how much you have noticed." He looked at the table. "Who was Mr. Gaylor's guest last night?"

"Ah, the empty glasses, sir; a Mr. Chance Crichton."

"And he left—when?"

"I let him out at eleven-forty-five p.m."

"Did anyone call after that?"

"No, sir. I locked up after that. Locked and bolted. The bolts was in place when I sent the boy for a constable."

"Did you see your master after Mr. Crichton left the house?"

"No, sir."

Lavery shot a question at the Divisional Surgeon.

"How long dead?"

"Hard to say exactly, but not much less than eight hours—might be a bit more."

Lavery whistled.

"That looks awkward for Mr. Crichton, doesn't it?" said he.

"No, sir," said Beldon.

"Eh?"

"The master addressed me as I was letting Mr. Crichton out."

"Did he, though? To what effect?"

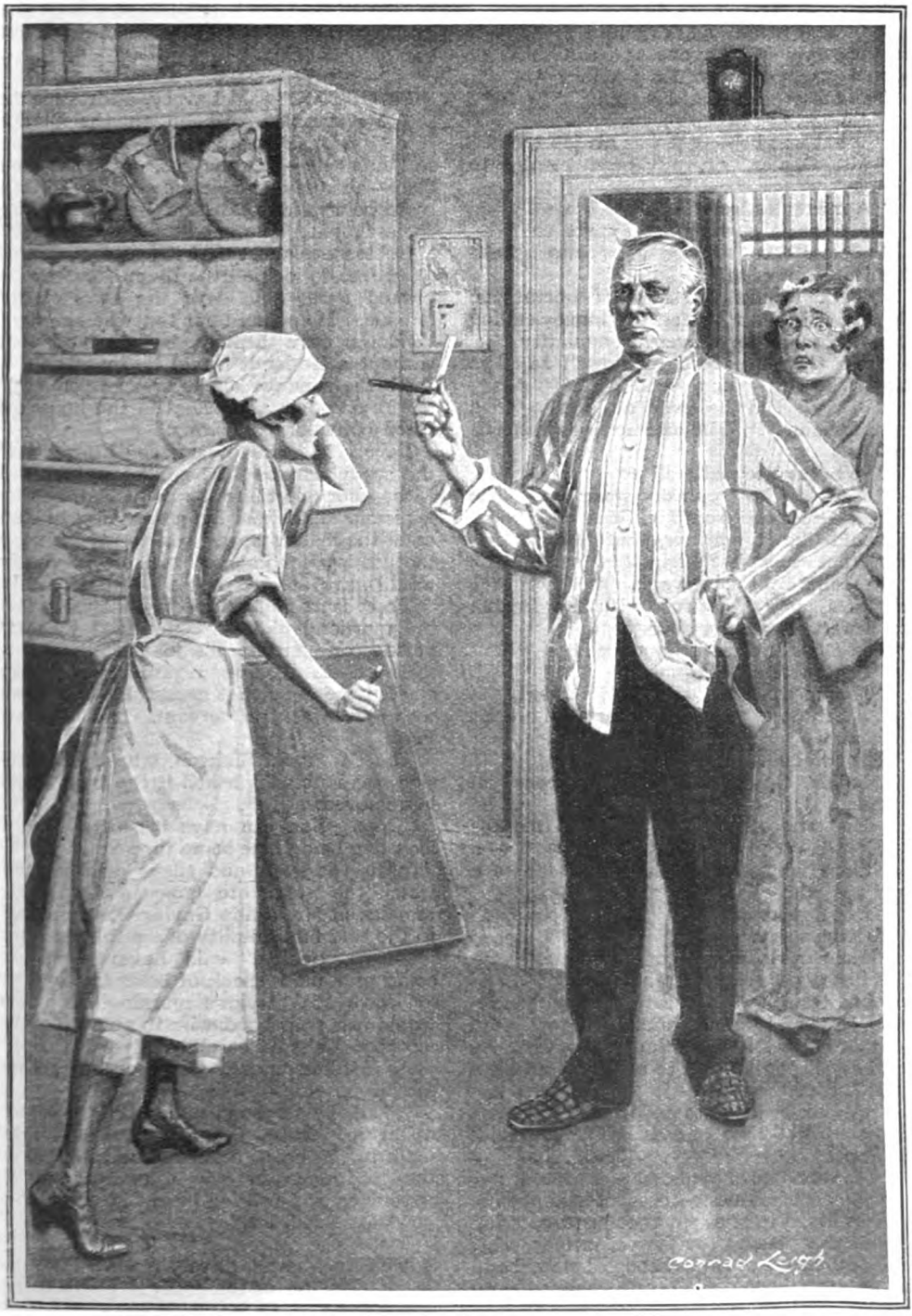
"At a quarter to twelve, sir, my bell rang from the study. As I reached the hall Mr. Crichton came out of the study, I heard the master say 'Good-night, Crichton,' and Mr. Crichton replied 'Good-night' as he came down the stairs. Then the master called: 'Beldon, Mr. Crichton's car.' I replied, 'Very good, sir,' and he said, 'I shall be working late and don't want to be disturbed. You can lock up.'"

"That all?"

"No, sir; as I was shooting the bolts I heard the master whistle. I think it was 'I Want to be Happy.'"

"Anyone else hear this dialogue?"

"Mrs. Beldon, my wife, may have. She was in my service pantry fetching some polishers I'd borrowed."



"My good girl, control yourself," said the butler, as Elsie screamed again.

"We must have a talk with Mrs. Beldon."

"Yes, sir."

"In the meantime, Crichton seems out of the running. Anyone you can think of with a grudge against Mr. Gaylor?"

The butler scratched his chin.

"No, sir, not in particular."

"What was he—what was his job?"

"Mr. Gaylor, sir, advanced money to people."

"A moneylender?"

"A financial adviser and expert, sir."

Lavery's face screwed itself into a half-comical expression.

"That widens the field of operations, doesn't it? As a profession, moneylending does not make for universal popularity."

"Mr. Gaylor advertised himself as 'The Man Who Does You a Good Turn.'"

"M'yes. Did he ever do you a good turn, Beldon?" The question was put with point.

The butler drew himself up.

"Never," he replied, steadily. "The money I received from Mr. Gaylor I earned. I would like to add, sir, that after closing the front door last night I went straight downstairs to the servants' hall, where I played a game of patience with Mrs. Beldon until we both went to bed."

The Divisional Surgeon smiled.

"*Qui s'excuse*," he quoted.

"Not in this case, sir," said Beldon, "if you'll pardon my being familiar with a little French."

The two men laughed.

"Is Mr. Gaylor married?" Lavery demanded.

"His wife died some eighteen months ago, sir."

"Since when he has lived the life of a celibate, eh?"

"One supposes so, sir."

"Come now."

"Mr. Gaylor did not confide in me."

"But you have your opinions?"

"Mr. Gaylor was a pleasure-loving gentleman, sir, and I do not think he allowed grief to take possession of him. However, '*De mortuis*,' if you happen to be familiar with a little Latin."

"Familiar enough to understand what you mean. But how about some details, Beldon?"

"He was fond of cards, sir—of wine, and—er—the accompanying—er—entertainments. I have heard it said, sir, that in private life Mr. Gaylor was, to use the vernacular, a bit of a dog, sir—a devil. Though I should add in his own house he always behaved very regular and right."

"Was his marriage a happy one?"

Beldon seemed dubious.

"I can't speak at first hand. I came into his service when he was a widower, but it's rumoured that the lady suffered a good deal on his account—so much so that death lost some of its sting."

"PORTER," said Lavery, addressing the constable, "get on to the Station and ask them to find out about Mr. Gaylor's wife—who she was, where she came from—all they can let me know." Once more he turned to Beldon. "This locking up last night. Of what does that consist?"

Beldon explained that it was a custom of the house to lock all the room doors on the ground level, and leave the keys on the outside. He pointed out that the basement windows were heavily barred and that without a ladder it would be impossible to reach the windows of the upper floors.

"Besides, sir, the sashes in the house are fitted with burglar alarms."

Lavery had already satisfied himself that the study window had not been tampered with. For one thing it was locked, and for a second there was a fine coating of dust upon the mahogany sill which anyone using the window for ingress or egress inevitably would have disturbed.

These facts pointed to the conclusion that the murder had been committed by some person or persons inside the house. A question to Beldon regarding the staff elicited the reply that besides his wife there were three female servants and the boy Fred.

The Divisional Surgeon, whose examination was complete, asked if the body could be removed.

"Yes. You can have it shifted, but I look like being here some time yet."

With the swift and silent efficiency for which the police are famous, the earthly remains of Mr. Philip Gaylor were removed to the cold inhospitality of a public morgue.

"Now, Beldon," said Lavery, "if you could give me a snack of breakfast and let me have Mr. Gaylor's morning mail, and would ask your good wife to spare me five minutes, I should be obliged."

As Beldon reached the door he was recalled.

"And, by the way, we'll have the blinds up again, please. The servants are to remain in the house and are not to speak to the tradesmen or any other person. If anyone calls, I will see them."

"Very good, sir."

LEFT to himself, Lavery made a fresh examination of the study. Every detail came under a searching scrutiny. Cigar ash and half-burnt matches lay on the carpet near Gaylor's arm-chair—testifying a constant if untidy smoker. On a small

table adjoining the second arm-chair was an ash tray containing a number of cigarette ends of varying lengths. In one case a cigarette had burnt itself out practically unsmoked. Grey and cylindrical in form, the ash stretched across a small grooved rest on the edge of the tray and lay over the ends beneath. From the evenness of the lip stains, it was evident these cigarettes had been consumed by one smoker. Mr. Chance Crichton, without a doubt. For some minutes Lavery puzzled over the lack of uniformity in the length of the cigarette ends. To the trained mind it conveyed a suggestion of nervousness. From among the cinders in the housemaid's box, which, in her terrified exit from the room, she had left in the grate, he rescued the butts of three cigars bearing indentations of Mr. Gaylor's teeth.

The glass on the writing table within reach of Mr. Gaylor's arm was still half full of stale whisky and soda. Chance Crichton's glass was empty. Lavery turned his attention to the writing table. Lying upon the blotting pad was a rough draft of a Colonial Building Society scheme to which a slip of paper was attached that read :—

" DEAR G——,

" I think there's money in the idea. Look it over and give me your views when I dine with you Thursday.

" Yours,

" C. C."

The draft was in typescript, with corrections in the same handwriting as the note. Evidently it was to discuss this matter that Chance Crichton had spent the preceding evening with the dead man.

LAVERY found nothing else of significance on the writing table, although in one of the drawers there was a fully loaded revolver. There were no personal letters of any kind. The furniture bore no traces of violence. Everything was orderly and correct.

" As I read the card," Lavery murmured to himself, " the murderer knocked Gaylor out and throttled him while he was still insensible."

He could find no instrument in the room with which the blow could have been struck, and it seemed reasonable to suppose a knuckle-duster had been used.

A curious feature of the case—perhaps the most curious—was a semicircle of cigar ash forming a broad band on the carpet immediately *in front* of the dead man's chair. Except in one place this ash had not been trodden upon. This Lavery had noticed the minute he first entered the room. It was significant, and pointed to the conclusion that Gaylor was sitting in his chair when the blow had fallen—or rather risen, for the bruise on the jaw could only have been caused by something in the nature of an upper-cut. The trodden ash marked the toe of a shoe pointing inwards or towards the body.

If Crichton had committed the murder there would have been nothing surprising in this feature, for what was to prevent Crichton from attacking his host unaware ? But Crichton clearly was not the murderer, or Beldon would not have heard his master's voice saying " Good-night " during and after letting Crichton out of the house.

Surely Gaylor, confronted with an unexpected intruder in the middle of the night, would have sprung to his feet and put up some sort of defence. But there was the testimony of the cigar ash to prove he had not done so.

Before the body was removed Lavery had placed his left foot on the footmark in the ash and had found from that position he could have conveniently landed his right fist on the point of the dead man's jaw. The distance was perfect. The only other person in the house who might have approached Gaylor without exciting suspicion was Beldon, but Lavery could not bring himself to suspect that pillar of respectability and level-headedness. It was unlikely Mrs. Beldon or one of the female servants commanded a punch sufficiently powerful to render a man insensible with a single blow. That sort of feat called for practice. And yet the whole house had been locked up—inside and out.

The case, which at first had looked simple, was beginning to pile up complexities.

Frowning to himself, Lavery turned his attention to the bookshelves. Here were a number of volumes dealing with business methods and finance, some lighter reading of rather too piquant a flavour, confessions of ladies' maids and other persons with unique opportunities for intimate observation —translations from the French, etc.—a shelf bearing a litter of gramophone records, selections from comic operas and jazz tunes, some loose and some in albums, and a lower shelf containing the Encyclopædia Britannica.

It was evident Mr. Gaylor's tastes had balanced between the recondite and the frivolous. Lavery opened the cupboard beneath the pedestal gramophone, but apart from two or three dusty records there was nothing of interest. From the top of the gramophone he picked up a pair of small-sized man's gloves. Mindful of Gaylor's large fat hands, Lavery assumed that they

"Porter," said Lavery, addressing the constable, "get on to the Station and

must have been the property of someone else.

Leaving the gloves where he found them, Lavery went downstairs to breakfast.

Mrs. Beldon, who brought him his breakfast on a tray, was a buxom woman with a pneumatic figure, which under the pressure of circumstances appeared somewhat deflated.

"Tell me," said Lavery, "just what you heard from the service pantry."

"Well, sir, it wasn't much, to be sure, but I heard master wish Mr. Crichton good-night, and while Beldon was locking up I heard him whistling."

"You are sure of that?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Mr. Gaylor was fond of whistling?"

"Well, he was, sir, there's no denying it. A catchy tune would always set him off."

"I see."

Lavery took a shot in the dark.

"Mrs. Beldon, after you and your husband went to bed last night, what persuaded him to get up again?"

Mrs. Beldon caught her breath and blushed.

"It was the hiccups," she said. "'E's had trouble with his juno-enum, and often has to take a drop of vinegar to steady it."

Lavery resisted a temptation to laugh.

"How long did he leave you alone?"

"He didn't, sir. I went with him, for I never allow even Beldon to meddle with my cupboards."

"Vinegar, you said?"

"Yes, sir, Sarson's. I do 'ope you don't suspect Beldon of——"

"No, I don't," said Lavery, to her intense relief. Then—

"Were you fond of your master, Mrs. Beldon?"

"No, sir," the woman replied with candour.

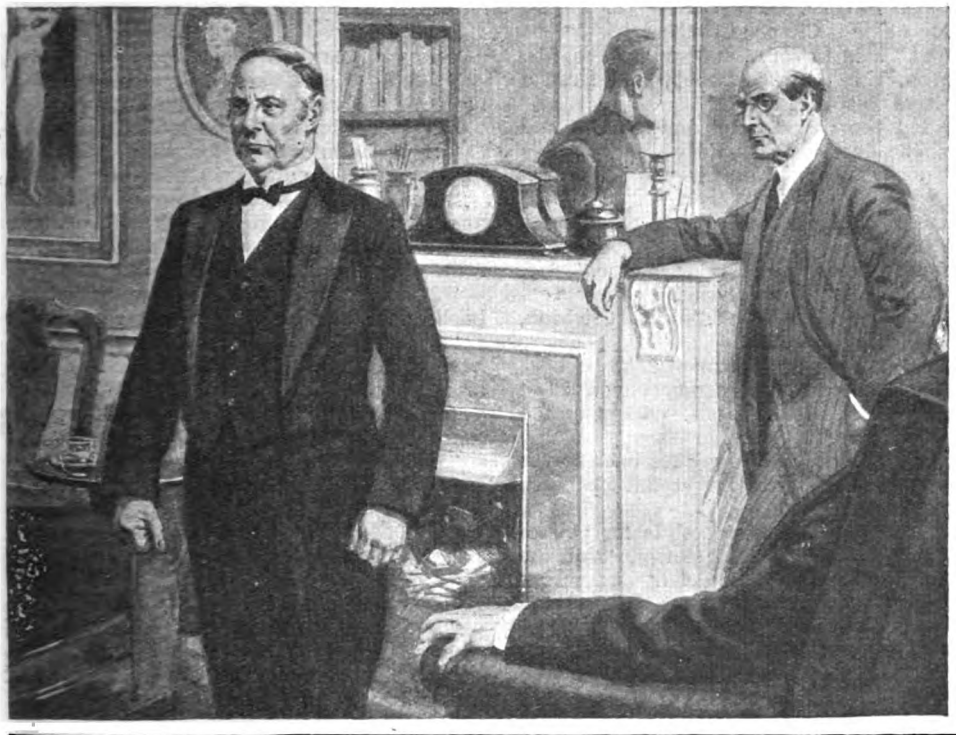
"Oh!"

"He was not my idea of a nice gentleman—though I never 'ad any cause myself to complain."

"Why do you say he was not nice, then?"

"Well, sir, apart from 'earsay a woman knows the kind of man a man is by bein' near him. It's no good pretending she doesn't."

"That'll do, Mrs. Beldon, thank you," said Lavery, and turned his attention to a pile of letters addressed to Philip Gaylor, Esq.



ask them to find out about Mr. Gaylor's wife—all they can let me know."

The correspondence was scarcely of the kind a man might wish to have read by a stranger on the morning after his death. There were pathetic appeals from various persons begging for more time in which to repay—an hysterical letter from a curate calling down the vengeance of Heaven upon oppressors, and a passionate screed from a woman who signed herself "Lottie," and who wrote that beyond all doubt or question Philip Gaylor was "the vilest creature that crawled." As he dropped the pile into his pocket, Lavery reflected that if this was a sample of the feeling Gaylor had inspired among clients and associates, it would appear that a number of persons might have sought to take his life with enthusiasm.

The telephone bell in the lobby rang and Lavery rose to answer it. As he crossed the hall there was a knock at the front door. The policeman on duty in the study came downstairs to answer it as Lavery picked up the receiver.

It was a call from the Yard.

"No, the line's dull," he said. "What? Mrs. Gaylor was not married to Mr. Gaylor? Wife by courtesy! I see. Who? Wait, I'll write that down. Lydia Charrable, yes. Wife of Edward Charrable."

As Mr. Chance Crichton entered the house, with eyebrows slightly raised at the sight of the policeman who had admitted him, Lavery's voice was distinctly audible.

"Who do you want?" the policeman demanded.

Chance Crichton ignored the question for a moment. His attention was elsewhere. At a repetition of the question, he replied :—

"Mr. Gaylor, please."

The policeman told him to wait.

Lavery came out of the lobby.

"Yes?" said he.

Chance Crichton looked him up and down.

"I am beginning to wonder if I am not in the wrong house," he said. "Except that it is impossible for two houses to have such villainous wallpaper, I should be sure of it."

CHANCE CRICHTON was a tall, spare man with a thin, weather-beaten face and an oddly comical twist to his mouth. Bright eyes, square-lidded, twinkled from deep hollows surmounted by heavy brows. There was something debonair in his carriage—a kind of insolent grace by no means unattractive. His age was perhaps forty, or a little more.

"Be good enough to tell me who you are," said Lavery.

"My name is Chance Crichton."

"Ah!" said Lavery. "Come in here, Mr. Crichton. My name is Lavery and I am a Detective Inspector."

He led the way to the dining-room and closed the door.

"Now what can I do for you?" he demanded.

Chance Crichton laid his hat and stick upon the table.

"I want to see Mr. Gaylor, please."

"You can't," said Lavery.

"Well, then, I can't," said Crichton, and smiled.

"Had you an appointment?"

"No; I came to fetch some papers I left with him last night. Some papers and a pair of gloves."

Lavery manœuvred to get his back to the window that the light might fall upon his visitor's face.

"I am afraid it is impossible for you to see Mr. Gaylor," he said slowly, "for the reason that Mr. Gaylor is dead."

Chance Crichton did not betray the slightest embarrassment. His face developed an expression of real satisfaction.

"Well, come," said he. "That's the first thing I ever heard about Gaylor that I really liked."

Lavery started.

"Better be careful, hadn't you, Mr. Crichton?" he exclaimed. "Isn't that rather a dangerous statement?"

"I don't see why."

"Then I'll tell you why. Mr. Gaylor was murdered shortly before or after midnight."

"Well, no one could be more pleased than I am," was the answer.

"Do you want to get yourself hanged?" cried Lavery, in genuine amazement.

"Not in the least. I have suffered more than enough sorrow and inconvenience from Philip Gaylor to add a hanging to the score. But I can't see what is to prevent me expressing pleasure at the news that someone has polished off a first-class blighter. After all, it saves me the risk and inconvenience of having to do it."

IN all his professional experience Lavery had never been so bewildered.

"Are you so sure you didn't do it, Mr. Crichton?"

"Have you any reason to believe I did?"

"You were alone with Gaylor till eleven-forty-five last night. You were the last man to see him alive."

"There's a flaw in the argument somewhere," Crichton replied, "for as I was putting on my coat in the hall Gaylor shouted to that butler fellow, Beldon, that he wasn't to be disturbed again."

Lavery tapped his foot irritably.

"So you heard the voice too?"

"Too? Has Beldon already supplied me with a clean slate? That's capital."

Lavery set his teeth and looked grim.

"If it hadn't been for that you'd be under arrest by now, Mr. Crichton."

"Yes, I suppose it lets me out," Crichton answered with a laugh. "Although perhaps it was Gaylor's ghost who spoke—redressing a life of sin by protecting the righteous"

"Perhaps you found a means of getting back into the house, Mr. Crichton?"

"I suppose it's possible, but it would have to have been very late. Ten minutes after leaving here I was playing bridge with a few friends. We didn't break up till four a.m."

"Where were you playing?"

"The Tudor House, St. James's Street."

"I can verify that."

"Do. Or would it be simpler for you to ring up Lord Alfred Forres? I was his guest."

Lavery bit his lip.

"I wonder," he said, "what exactly you are up to? You confess to having had a grudge against Gaylor."

Crichton nodded.

"And confess you wouldn't have minded killing him yourself."

"True; but let's understand one another. Certainly Gaylor is better dead; on the other hand, I was in no hurry to kill him. One presumes that dead men have no feelings, and I wanted him to suffer a bit beforehand."

"Suffer?"

"Among other things I meant to break him financially. He was the kind of beast who kept his soul in his trousers pocket, along with his other small change."

"You meant to break him? That's interesting."

"I had given a good deal of time and thought to it. You may have come across a building prospectus on his table. That was a bait he was on the verge of swallowing. It was a most arrant swindle, believe me."

In face of candour such as this Lavery was nonplussed. There was no precedent save in lunacy for a man to behave as Crichton was behaving. True he had a perfect alibi, but it went beyond the bounds of common sense to take for granted that he could talk like this and still be free from suspicion of guilt. A gathering conviction spread over Lavery's mind that this candour was in itself an expression of guilt—a form of hysteria manifested by ease and coolness rather than by terror. He began to wonder

whether he was not in the presence of a man who was a homicidal genius—the one murderer of all the ages who had devised and carried out the perfect untraceable crime. If this were so his only hope of obtaining a conviction would be to trip up Crichton into a confession, and as sometimes the scene in which a crime has been committed reacts upon the nervous system of a criminal, Lavery determined to take his visitor upstairs.

"Let's finish our talk in the study," he said, watching the effect of his words. "The servants will be wanting to clear the table."

Chance Crichton did not show a vestige of concern.

"Where you will," he remarked. "I should have to have gone up to recover my gloves, if they are still there."

LAVERY led the way.

"Wait below," he said to the policeman on duty. "And switch the telephone through to the study." He shut the door. "Take that chair, Mr. Crichton—you're used to it."

Chance Crichton dropped into the chair indicated and lit a cigarette. A silence fell. Lavery was first to speak.

"You smoked a great deal last night."

"No more than usual. They say smoking is bad for the nerves; but I have never found it so."

"A cigarette end is an open book to the trained mind, Crichton."

"A form of light reading, I suppose."

"The cigarettes in your ash tray told me a good deal."

"For example?"

"That you were in a highly nervous state."

Crichton shrugged his shoulders.

"On a professional point it is rude to contradict an expert. Perhaps I was rather keyed up. But if you were to be sitting with a man you were longing to slosh in the jaw you'd be nervous yourself, Lavery."

Candour had armed Chance Crichton at every point. It was evident that subtler methods would have to be tried. In a low voice Lavery began to reconstruct the crime, bit by bit, suiting action to the word as he did so.

"He can have suspected nothing—his assailant stepped up and struck him with a knuckle-duster—so, here on the jaw. Then he did a horrible thing. He whipped a wire round his neck and twisted, twisted it tight—tight——"

He paused dramatically.

"I suppose at this point," said Crichton, "like the King in 'Hamlet,' I leap to my feet crying 'Lights—lights—away!'"

Lavery sank back in his chair, breathing heavily.

"No, no, Lavery. You're on the wrong track, my dear fellow. I agree that the whole business is very baffling, but it's sheer waste of time trying to paste a warrant for murder on to me."

"I'm beginning to believe you're right," Lavery confessed. "Though if you're innocent, I'd like to know why you hadn't the sense to keep your mouth shut."

"You would—you shall; for that's easily answered. A beast has been killed, Lavery, wherefore I rejoice."

Chance Crichton had dropped all banter now and his eyes blazed.

"What reason have you to call him a beast?" said Lavery, tensely.

"The best in the world. Look about you! Look at the fat, smug stall the beast lived in. Think of the beast himself—his thick, fat hands and neck. Look at his dirty trade—his dirty, bloodsucking methods. Look at the filth and trash that to him stood for amusement."

He jumped up and paced across the room. "These books—pornographic muck—shelves of 'em. The music he listened to!" He flung open the gramophone and set the plate revolving with a trigger. The automatic action dropped the needle on a record and a vulgar jazz tune blared out noisily. "Listen to it—why, even a Hottentot wouldn't degrade——"

"Stop that damn thing at once," Lavery ordered. "Have you no sense of decency? A man died in this room less than a dozen hours ago——"

Crichton laughed.

"What more fitting requiem?" he said, picking up the record and tossing it carelessly among a heap of others on the shelf. "Or, if you don't think he's deserving of musical honours, choose a passage from one of those," and he indicated a row of paper-backed novels, "to read over his grave."

Lavery dropped a heavy hand on Crichton's shoulder.

"Sit down," he ordered. "Sit down and answer my question."

Crichton picked up his neglected cigarette and returned to his chair. The moment of craziness had passed completely.

"I am sorry I offended your sensibilities, Lavery, but Gaylor is a subject I feel rather strongly about."

"And you don't leave this room till I know why."

There was a long pause, then:—

"You're a decent fellow, Lavery—I like you, and I don't see why you shouldn't know. It can't affect me one way or another, and if I don't tell you, you are sure to find

out. The Mrs. Gaylor who died just over a year ago was my wife."

"What's that?"

"Yes. My real name's Charrable. You were using it as I came into the house. But for that, perhaps I shouldn't have been quite so candid."

"Go on," said Lavery.

IN a curiously dry and staccato manner Charrable began to speak.

"It was in 1916. We married—all in a hurry. You know—and next day I was packed off—to Mespot. A pretty hellish wrench; but war's war, and it was something to have half a warm heart beating under one's ribs and the other half left safely at home in somebody's keeping. Did I say safely? Ha! What a word! It's hard to get a clear vision of those times after all this while, don't you agree? But women—some women—well, I suppose the war rattled 'em. Enough to! Anyway, Lydia——" He broke off and rubbed his hands over his eyes. "It's pretty damnable when you're doing your silly bit out there—the inconvenience—danger too, if it comes to that—and some Cuthbert—some blighter who hadn't the guts to see a London air raid through 'cept from underground—some blighter, I was saying, sneaks in, collars the only person you ever cared a damn for. Howsomever, they contrived to manage it somehow. When I heard—a letter from a pal told me—I put in for leave for myself and one Webley Mark Four loaded in six chambers. But somehow the old man—my colonel—tumbled to it that I was out for mischief, and he scotched me. Lydia wrote if I gave her a divorce the beast would marry her. I'd have given Lydia anything in the world, and it wasn't a great deal to ask. The thing was fixed up with me as the guilty one. I didn't go home after the war—didn't want to. I went—never mind where I went. That's my affair. Little over a year ago I heard Lydia was dead—and glad to be dead. I heard, too, that Gaylor had never kept his promise. They were not married." He lit another cigarette and blew a thin spiral upward. "I think I'm justified in calling Gaylor a beast, don't you?"

It was a full minute before Lavery replied.

"I don't think—I know—know exactly what I'd have done in your place."

"Shot him?"

The detective nodded.

"With an easy conscience—what?"

The detective nodded.

Chance Crichton gave a short, hard laugh.

"You'd forgive yourself, Lavery. It's easy to forgive oneself, but would you forgive another man, if it happened to be your job to catch him?"

Lavery scratched his chin.

"The law doesn't allow——" he began.

"Doesn't allow the individual the privilege of recognizing the justice of another's actions. I know—I know. Because of that—I am grateful to whoever it was who killed Philip Gaylor *after* I left the house."

For a long while the two men watched one another in silence. Then Lavery said:—

"I like you, Charrable, as well as any man I've met. In confidence now—how did you do it?"

Charrable laughed. "I'm half ashamed," he said, "to be unable to answer that. As an avenger, I've been cheated. Aren't you satisfied I couldn't have done it?"

"I'm satisfied it can't be proved that you did it."

"Then you've met a man who has committed the perfect and indetectable crime. More than that, a crime that is hallowed by justice."

He rose and held out a hand.

"Unless you feel justified in detaining me?"

"I sha'n't detain you. There's not enough evidence. But in my own mind, Charrable, I'm just as sure—as sure——"

At the door Charrable turned.

"I wish I could give you a hint," he said, "but, after all, it isn't my affair. The best of luck."

AFTER the front door closed Lavery sat for half an hour with his head in his hands. At the ringing of the telephone at his elbow, he started like a man awakened from a dream.

"Hullo! hullo!" he shouted.

The voice that answered was Charrable's.

"That you, Lavery? I hated leaving you all screwed up with perplexity. Actually, there's no need, for I've marked out a line of flight I'm laying odds you wouldn't follow in a thousand years. And my ultimate destination is a place where few strangers penetrate. I did kill Gaylor, and I just can't bear the idea of anyone else getting the credit. Pride, eh? If you want to know how, here's a hint. Think out everything I did after you took me up to the study, and if that doesn't lead you right, bear in mind that I'm a pretty average mimic. Good-bye."

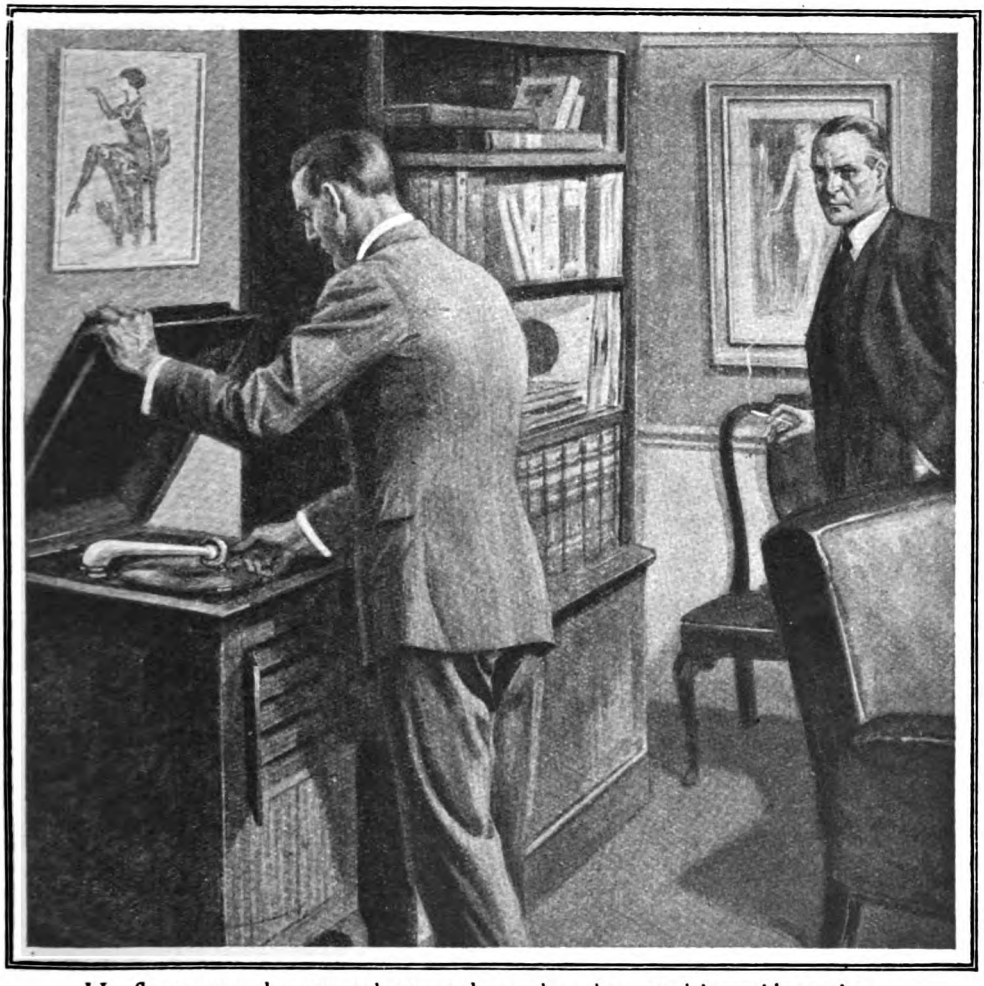
"Here, wait a moment," Lavery roared, but there was no answer—the line was dead.

When illumination came, it came with a rush, and leaping across the room Lavery rummaged hurriedly among the scattered

gramophone records until he found what he sought.

But before putting the record on to the plate, he went to the landing and called to the policeman below.

Mr. Crichton's car." A longer pause. "I shall be working late and don't want to be disturbed. You can lock up." Followed a considerable silence before a few bars of music were whistled.



He flung open the gramophone and set the plate revolving with a trigger. A vulgar jazz tune blared out noisily.

"Go down to the kitchen and shut yourself in."

Then he returned and closed the door.

There was a self-stopping mechanism to the gramophone that automatically came into action at the end of every piece.

Lavery put on the record and set the motor in action.

The vulgar jazz rattled and wailed to a climax. Then came a pause—then a voice, thick and rather guttural, said :—

"Good-night, Crichton. . . . Beldon,

The machine clicked, the record ceased rotating—the needle was jerked up on a spring.

Lavery stood for a while thinking and rubbing the lower half of his face with a nervous hand. Suddenly he came to a decision, and, taking the record from the plate, he broke it into a dozen small pieces and dropped them in his pocket.

A moment later he was ringing up Scotland Yard.

"This needs a better brain than mine," he said.

MY LETTERS *from* GILBERT AND SULLIVAN

MISS MURIEL BARNBY

in last month's issue talked of her early memories of Sir W. S. Gilbert. This month she deals with the letters written to her and other members of her family by Sir Arthur Sullivan. These letters are now published for the first time.

A SPECIAL INTERVIEW BY
CLAUDE F. LUKE

THE letters from Sullivan were brief in comparison with those of Gilbert; he was, of course, a far less prolific letter-writer than the librettist. But those which Miss Barnby now read to me, by reason of their friendly sentiments, revealed him in a number of delightful moods. Far too little of his correspondence has been preserved, and it was with something of the emotions of a lucky prospector that I perused each letter as Miss Barnby handed it to me.

Miss Muriel Barnby when a child.

'When my father was Precentor at Eton, both Gilbert and Sullivan were frequent visitors to our house in the Cloisters," said Miss Barnby, "and Uncle Arthur never missed slipping a bright new half-sovereign into my hand on leaving. The famous operas were often discussed, and all of us were acquainted with the plot and most of the music long before the piece was produced. Sullivan would say to father: 'Well, Jo, Gilbert has given me a teaser this time. What about writing music to words like these?' He would then quote some of his partner's trickiest metres. Then he would cross to the small upright piano—it is the one you now see over there — and would show us how he had interpreted musically the rhythm of Gilbert's lyrics. I, a little thin-legged girl in red stockings, would curl myself up in an arm-chair and listen entranced.

"Sullivan delighted to tease me about my legs. He called me 'Flamingo,' and to the huge delight of my brothers would often draw impossible caricatures of me, which, unfortunately, I invariably destroyed. Starting with a tiny head and body at the top of the page, he would then sketch two thin legs, which he pretended he could not finish on one page, and to the giggling accompaniment of my brothers would turn over and assign me a pair of enormous feet overleaf. One day, however, observing tears in my eyes, he immediately drew a little girl with plump legs and tiny feet and printed 'Muriel' beneath, and after that the joke was never repeated.

"About this time my father and Uncle Arthur were closely associated in editing a new book of hymns. Also they collaborated in preparing fresh hymn tunes and devotional music of all kinds. These first letters give an excellent insight into the

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working habits of musicians. Each would send the other words of hymns with the request that they should be fitted with appropriate music. For example, just before Sullivan began work on 'Thespis,' my father had made such a request, whereupon Sullivan wrote :—

"'Will you send me the words of the hymn you want me to set ***at once***, please ?

"'I must begin my Comic Opera next week, and shall then have no time.

"'Capital preparation for the work ! '

"Similarly, here is another note written in 1873 in which Sullivan returns the compliment :—

"'My dear Joseph (he writes),—

"'Will you write me a tune ***at once*** for the enclosed words ? Something simple and touching such as none can do better than yourself.

"'Would you care to reset the words : "Whence shall our tears begin " (hymnary 218). Morne's tune is a feeble part-song, and thoroughly uncongregational. The words are only short metre with two (irregular) ten lines.

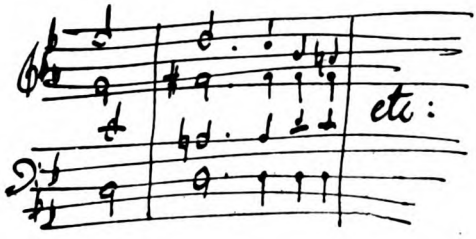
"'If you will write the tune—a simple and easy one—I shall be very grateful. I am delighted you are going to do the Christmas Oratorio. It is so lovely. I will put you up to another Cantata which has never been done in England yet.'

"Three days later he has evidently received the hymn tune, and comments upon it thus :—

"'I read through your hymn tune with great delight, until I came to the phrase, "Father, in Thy gracious keeping," which rather jarred upon me, as it hardly seems tender enough for a simple funeral hymn, which in most cases will be sung by the trebles only. The D flat seems hard. Perhaps I may be wrong, but at all events it will set you thinking, whether it would not be better to keep in E flat and give more repose. Anyhow, whatever you do, I shall be too glad to have such a good tune.'

"There is this other note in which he suggests a change of key for one of my father's best-known hymns. It is interesting to note that the suggestion was adopted and appears in the version now sung in the churches. Sullivan writes :—

"'Hymn A. & M. Am very keen about your altering your tune, "Lord of our Life." Would you object to the A flat ***at once*** ? Thus :—



"'It seems to me more robust. Let me know.'

"Sacred music was occupying much of Uncle Arthur's time just then, and my father suggested that he should conduct the Te Deum Chorus at a Musical Festival which my father was arranging at the Albert Hall. It was in connection with this concert that Sullivan wrote the following :—

"'I don't think there is any inconsistency in doing the "Vouchsafe, O Lord ! " from the Te Deum at the Shah's Concert. The whole feeling of the Te Deum is jubilant, and this one especially so. On this occasion it would merely be a preface to the "Domine salvam fac." I am loath to give it up as the effect of the whole thing will, I think, be very imposing, and I have long wished to hear it in the Albert Hall. I think if it is called "Domine salvam fac reginam " from the Festival Te Deum, people won't criticize it hostilely, and it will be quite as appropriate as anything else could be. So I hope you won't give it up. In the books we will print the words " Vouchsafe, etc.," ordinary size, and the " O Lord, save the Queen, etc.," in gigantic pantomime (!) letters. I shall be in town to-morrow—"Raising of Lazarus," Barnett's work, at three. I have just done the same episode in my new Oratorio, and am anxious to see how he has treated it. Forgive this scrawl. I have rheumatism in my right arm and can hardly hold a pen (like Mr. Squeers)! '"

Sir Arthur Sullivan

So far the letters were all those of Sullivan

as a comparatively young man, when his early training in devotional music was still wielding a profound influence on his creative work. That gay butterfly, the Sullivan of the operas, was only just emerging from the chrysalis of the chorister. But now Miss Barnby jumped a gap of many years in the letters she read to me, and immediately I found myself listening to the writings of Sullivan the successful, Sullivan the ingenious master of rhythm, Sullivan the Savoy idol.

"IN the early 'nineties," Miss Barnby continued, "my father was occasionally asked to conduct the Windsor Choral Society, whose interests he had always sponsored. He was passionately keen that the early efforts of the society should not be wasted, and in 1890 made a great bid to save its failing fortunes. He decided to produce Sullivan's latest oratorio, 'The Golden Legend,' and wrote to Uncle Arthur thus :—

"'My dear Arthur,—

"'In the hope of preventing the Windsor Choral Society falling to the ground, Parratt and I agreed each to conduct a concert this season; *he* selected "The Revenge," and *I* "The Golden Legend." He made use of an amateur band (local); I need not say that *I* cannot; so I have engaged a complete orchestra (Albert Hall), two-thirds of the expense of which I shall have to pay, and I have also secured Madame Dotti, Miss Sarah Berry, Charles Banks, and Watkin Mills, *all* of whom I shall have to pay, so you see I am looking forward to an expenditure of nearly one hundred pounds; added to this I have been working for weeks to bring the Chorus to a state of decent efficiency. This is *my* share of the fun; now I want to know if you will be very kind enough to lend me the bells, free, gratis, *and* for nothing! There now, the murder's out!

"'I thought I would harrow you up with the hundred pounds before asking you the favour; and then I thought, "Why, he *can't* refuse," and you can't, can you? I don't care whether it's the muffin bells or the pipe stoppers you graciously accord me, but one or other you are bound to let me have, because you can't forget the candlesticks I gave you (or you gave me, I forget which), and those candlesticks must be worked out.

"'The concert takes place March 19th, and I am told that possibly the Prince and Princess of Hohenbek—I mean Battenberg—may be present to supply a little local colour when Mills says, "*I here* is my German Prince again." But all this, serious as it is, is second in importance to the fact that if the room be full to the doors the receipts can only amount to fifty pounds and the expenses are already near one hundred and fifty pounds, and this affetuoso, poor old Buffer, will have to make up the deficiency; so don't forget the Bells, Bells, Bells, Bells, Bells; the tintinnabulation of the Bells. . . .'

"Uncle Arthur replied in equally facetious terms, one of his phrases being curiously prophetic of the modern system of furnishing. He writes :—

"'I burst into tears this morning when I read your letter; it appealed to my nobler nature. You *shall* have the bells and the tubes also if you like, carriage free, delivered (by our own carts) at your door.

"'Is there anything else I can do? If Mills should be ill don't let it put you out, as I keep a box of "Lucifers" ready for emergencies or "Els'ee" might be missed. Having now beaten Burnand on his own ground I will conclude. Blaas you.'

"Soon afterwards my mother desired a copy of 'The Golden Legend' for her own library, and wrote to Uncle Arthur asking him for one, to which request he responded thus :—

"'The Postmaster-General refuses to carry a copy of "The Golden Legend" to Eton to-night, under the frivolous excuse that it is past the hour. But he has promised to take charge of it on Monday, and deliver it to you as soon as he is able.

"'I do not send you a bound copy, firstly, because I haven't got one, and, secondly, you may perhaps be like me and prefer to bind your books in the right way, after your own fashion.

"'Could I resist such an appeal as was contained in your letter? No: the man who would refuse a woman's request, save in the way of kindness, etc., etc., you know the rest. Ask Jo if he would like me to preside at the bells on the 19th? I should probably produce novel effects.'

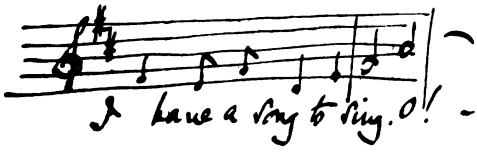
"His offer to play the bells was, I fancy, an artful reminder of the occasion when my father and he were associated with an 'orchestra' that included a number of weird and wonderful instruments. In 1880 this 'orchestra' gave a charity performance of Haydn's 'Toy Symphony' before the Prince of Wales at St. James's Hall, and it was pronounced a great success. Uncle Arthur's contribution was an occasional chirrup which was intended to represent the note of a cuckoo! My father achieved masterly effects with a tin whistle (I *believe* that was the instrument), while Sir John Stainer played the triangle and Signor Randegger did what he could with the drum!

"One other occasion when my father and Uncle Arthur were in active partnership occurred abroad. A series of entertainments were arranged in aid of the building fund for an English church at Pontresina. One of these was a performance of 'Cox and Box.' Uncle Arthur and Arthur Cecil shared the title-*rôles*, while my father played Sergeant Bouncer."

In "On and Off the Stage," the memoirs of Sir Squire and Lady Bancroft, this incident is recalled, and it is also told how delighted was Sullivan with an old waistcoat which Lady Bancroft had covered with some "loud" material for him to wear in the part of Cox. Sullivan, though fastidious in matters of dress, delighted to introduce as much colour into his apparel as the sombre limits of men's wear would allow. On one occasion he promised to go with Miss Barnby to buy a dress for her birthday, but when the day arrived he was unable to keep the appointment, and sent her a cheque for two guineas instead. On their next meeting he asked her whether she had bought the dress, whereupon the little girl replied: "You only sent me two guineas, Uncle, so I did the best I could and bought a bathing dress!"

"When I was nine years old," went on Miss Barnby, "'The Yeomen of the Guard' had just been produced, and the entire conversation at table centred around the new piece. Shortly after the first night my mother received this note:—

"'It *does* please me to know that



gives so much pleasure to Jo.'

"At that time I had not been to any theatre in my life, and was desperately eager to see this wonderful performance. At last my pleadings met with success. I went to a Savoy *matinée* with Julia Neilson and Uncle Arthur. Old George Grossmith was playing the part of Jack Point, and I can remember with what passionate interest I followed his wooing of Elsie. My sympathies were all with poor Jack Point, and how cruel was Elsie, I thought, to treat him so. When at last he fell dead at her feet, it was altogether too much for my tender young heart. I burst into tears. Of course, everybody laughed—except Uncle Arthur. He was very kind, and produced a gaily-coloured silk handkerchief to wipe away my tears. And then, still further to mollify me, he took me behind and showed me Mr. Grossmith, who was an old friend, very much alive and well. When he heard the circumstances, 'G. G.' kissed me and made a great fuss of me, and I went home radiantly happy.

"The next year saw me raised to the rank of a first-nighter, and how proud I was on finding myself at the opening night of 'The Gondoliers'! The whole piece was familiar to me beforehand, as both author and composer had frequently talked of it in our house. One famous lady condescendingly remarked what a lucky little girl I was to be present at such a brilliant function. Indignantly I replied that as I knew Decima Moore, the present Lady Guggisberg, who played in the piece, and that both Mr. Gilbert and Mr. Sullivan were *great* friends of mine, I considered that it was quite natural that I should be there!"

WHEN Sullivan was busy with the score of "Ivanhoe," the Barnby family frequently attended rehearsals of the work at the old English Opera House, now the Palace Theatre. No sooner was this work completed than Sullivan fled to Monte Carlo for a rest, and from there wrote Lady Barnby this letter:—

"The sun is shining brightly, the sky is blue, the sea is turquoise and sapphire, I have no work to do, and to crown my happiness your kind letter arrives this morning, wherein I find frank, honest, and sincere friendship on the part of yourself and dear old Jo. What man so lucky as I in having the goodwill and good wishes of all my old colleagues?

"Now, why don't you two come down here for your Easter holidays? If you haven't been here before, you can form no conception of the beauty of the place. If you have already been, you know how beautiful it is.

The parodied line is from "The Martyr of Antioch," which Sir Joseph had previously produced with the Eton Music Society.

Just as his age was a pet joke with Gilbert, so the subject of his photographs seems to have been a constant source of amusement to Sullivan. Writing from Alpes Maritimes in January, 1893, to Lady Barnby, he says:—

"I can order a large photo to be sent to you, but how, oh, how, can I sign it? Perhaps the

Miss Muriel Barnby and Sir Arthur Sullivan in George Grossmith's dressing-room after a performance of "The Yeomen of the Guard."

Miss Barnby tells an interesting story of this incident on the preceding page.

best thing to do is to have the portrait sent to you, and I will sign it when I come back to England. I see that Jo is full of activity and hard work, and is waking up all about him with a vengeance. He is proving what I once said to him before he began work—that the man makes the position, not the position the man. I speak as a sage. How are you and how do you like your weather? I am sending Muriel some sweets this week, and I do urge and entreat her not to eat them all and make herself ill, but to share them with her poor and deserving mother and father."

Again, on receipt of a photograph of her husband from Lady Barnby, with a request that he should satisfy Miss Muriel's desire for one of him under penalties of the direst threats, Sullivan replies :—

"What a splendid photograph! No present could have been more acceptable to me than the portrait of dear old Jo, and I thank you most warmly and sincerely for it.

"My whole energies will now be devoted to finding a decent one of myself, and so escaping Muriel's terrific wrath. But, alas! how poor mine will be in comparison to the one you have sent me. Never mind—although it cannot go into your Book of Beauty, it will form a prominent and interesting item in your private little Chamber of Horrors."

Eventually he sends the little girl the desired photograph, which is reproduced on page 53, and, dating the letter "The Feast of St. Box," writes :—

"Dear Muriel,—

"This photograph seems to me to be less repelling than most of those taken of me, and therefore I send it to you. I have put it in a frame so that it may not get mixed up with other eminent musicians."

"At a time when my father was suffering from an internal complaint," said Miss Barnby, "Uncle Arthur was a daily inquirer after his progress, sending notes or calling in person. The only survival of this correspondence is this letter, which shows how thoughtful he was and what a real affection he had for my father :—

"'My dear old Jo,—

"'From my own experience I gather that your crisis is over and that all you want is time to regain your strength. This rejoices my heart greatly. And now, my dear old boy, be very careful; mainly in the matter of eating and drinking. I followed the strictest régime after

my illness, and even now I am almost a teetotaller. Champagne and beer are the Index Expurgatorius, red wine makes blood too quickly. If you want a little stimulant, a little white wine (Moselle for choice, such as Zeltinger or Bramberger) and weak whisky and soda are the least harmful.

"'It was good of you to think of me on the first night of the "Chieftain," and your good wishes brought us luck.'

"After my father's death Uncle Arthur more than ever took us children under his wing, and many delightful excursions with him were our happy portion. On one occasion I and my two brothers, Laurie and Charlie, went with him to a revival of one of the operas—I forget which—and afterwards he wrote the following letter to my mother :—

"'If the children enjoyed themselves as much as I did, they may be pleased and contented. I am by nature fond of young people, doubly so when I find them as nice and affectionate towards me as yours are.

"'Besides, they bring back my old friend to my recollection. Our next engagement together is for the "Pirates of Penzance," probably next week, but I will let Muriel know betimes.'

"But before the next engagement he refers to was due to take place, poor Sullivan's throat trouble began. On the 5th October, 1900, just seven weeks before he died, he writes from an hotel in Tunbridge Wells thus:—

"'Dear Muriel,—

"'I came here on Monday to try and pick up a bit. It is uncertain when I return to London, therefore you must not wait for me to accompany you to the Pirates. The enclosed will admit you when you like, only please put the date on it, when you use it, before you present it at the Box Office.

"'It is lovely down here, but it has not yet done my throat much good.'

"He returned to London a dying man."

On a sadder note Miss Barnby then recalled her last memory of the great composer :—

"He had been ill for some time, and I, then a girl of twenty-one, made daily calls at his flat in Queen's Mansions. His man, Louis, walked like a ghost, while even Polly, his pet parrot, who always spelled her name with only one 'l,' had ceased her noisy chatterings. One morning I arrived and was met by Louis, who, motioning me to silence, led me to his master's room. I tip-toed inside ; it was all dark until Louis turned up the lights. Uncle Arthur lay perfectly still, his eyes closed, his lips curved in a faint smile. Suddenly Louis burst into tears and ran from the room, and I then knew that my dear old friend had passed away."

Miss Muriel Barnby.
Photo : Rita Martin.

STRANGELY moved, I came away from the quiet little house in Smith Square, through the sheltered calm of Dean's Yard, and so into the contrasting bustle of Victoria Street. Omnibuses shot past; violent streamers plastered on their sides announced the new Gilbert and Sullivan Season at the Prince's. They brought me with a jerk from the fragrant memories of the heyday of the immortal pair into the modern world still paying homage to their genius.

"All is well," I murmured softly; "their music lives ; the good is *not* interred with their bones. . . ."

THE EPIDEMIC

By

ARNOLD BENNETT

Illustrated by
CHARLES CROMBIE

I.

QUITE a little crowd of men and women, chiefly young, were assembled in the drawing-room of Mrs. Miss's boarding-house, "Fairbourne," at Exquay, when the stopping of a taxi outside put them into a state of excitement.

Exquay, that city of pleasure and health, set on seven wooded hills overlooking a lovely bay, is one of the five English seaside towns proudly known as the Queen of Watering Places. Once it was select and exclusive. Once it was "residential," its residences being villas each in a garden with butler and dinner-gong all complete; and its casual visitors crowded themselves into four old-fashioned hotels (six bathrooms between them), and into a few prim and expensive boarding-houses where the difference between class and class was deeply understood. Once nearly all its seekers after health and pleasure were retired military and naval officers and Anglo-Indians and their perfect ladies. Once it had no pier, no orchestra, no taxis. The coming of the motor-coach changed everything. The town ceased to be select. The number of boarding-houses enormously increased. The villas declined. The superior shops declined. Cheap shops and *cafés* multiplied. Tramcars multiplied. And innumerable dust-raising motor-coaches brought people from everywhere and took them everywhere—usually for about ten shillings.

These people knew and cared nothing for the fighting services and the Indian civil service. They mistrusted, feared, and ignorantly admired sartorial smartness, a correct London accent, and polished manners. They had their own code of manners, hearty, rough, and no-nonsense. The old residents cast ashes upon the old residents' heads and wept for the glory of the vanished past. The superior shopkeepers said that the end of the world was come, and sometimes went into bankruptcy. Wags began to call Exquay "Birmingham-on-Sea."

"Yes, it's him. Yes, it's the Magician. Look at his red moustache," said eager voices as a man descended from the taxi.

"I'll go and open the door," said Mr. Abel Hipgood.

In that astounding suggestion, which astounded nobody in the drawing-room, was shown the whole difference between the Present and the Past of Exquay. Imagine a guest at a boarding-house going to open the front-door to a caller! You cannot imagine it—if you happen to be a retired colonel.

But these comfortable, unconventional Midlanders were indeed strange. It was ten o'clock—were they in evening-dress? Not one of them. They dined in the middle of the day, took a plentiful tea at six, and ate a bit of bread and cheese before going to bed. Their blouses were blousy, their suits were apt to have two different patterns of check, their boots were strong and large, their ankles massive, their accents ditto. Sad sight and sounds for a colonel's lady! But they quite rightly thought very well of themselves, and were quite rightly convinced that they constituted the backbone of the country.

MR. ABEL HIPGOOD in particular thought well of himself. He was a man of thirty-three, small and neat, with a notable scarf-pin. He was obviously a Leader, and he led "Fairbourne." A plumber, he had succeeded to the moribund business of a deceased uncle in Wolverhampton and in a short time had restored it to prosperity. He accounted this a considerable feat, and seriously doubted whether any other person on earth could have accomplished it.

"Where's Miss Tansley?" he inquired on his way out of the drawing-room. (Miss

Copyright, 1926, by Arnold Bennett.

Tansley was the young woman who knew the red-headed Magician and had arranged the séance.)

"She's not come in," said someone.

"Oh, never mind! We'll dispense with introductions," said Mr. Hipgood, composedly, and proceeded to open the front-door.

"Good evening—er—Mr. Magician," he welcomed the gentleman with the red moustache. "Do come in. We're all waiting for you." He held out his hand, which Mr. Magician, after glancing at it, accepted and duly shook.

"*All* waiting for me, are you?" said Mr. Magician with an urbane, reserved smile. "Isn't that rather a lot?"

Mr. Hipgood perceived from his accent that Mr. Magician was a "real" gentleman. And he was glad, and at once began to imitate the style and accent of the real gentleman.

"I hope you won't *mind* all of us," said he, grandly. "We rather understood from Miss Tansley—— Your crystal's come. The boy brought it. We've been looking at it."

"Oh, my crystal's come, has it? That's all to the good. Shouldn't have been much use without it, should I?"

The Magician laughed soberly, and, Mr. Hipgood having courteously taken his hat, passed through the smiling and inquisitive throng, which had followed their Leader to the hall, into the drawing-room.

And there was the crystal, in its opened case, on a table in the midst of the room!

"Would you prefer the curtains drawn?" Mr. Hipgood inquired.

"I should—certainly."

The electricity was turned on and the curtains drawn.

"And now for our promised Peep into the Future," said Mr. Hipgood.

It was curious that though, when Miss Tansley had first proposed the visit of the crystal-gazer, everybody had laughed at the notion of there being anything whatever in crystal-gazing, now that the crystal-gazer had arrived and given a glance at the crystal, everybody began to believe in crystal-gazing, and to quake at the possibility of terrible prophecies.

"All sit, please," said Mr. Magician.

All sat except Mr. Hipgood.

"You too."

Mr. Hipgood sat—next to Miss Bertie Thaxted. (Bertie, in her case, was the diminutive of Alberta.) He had meant to remain standing—sign of his leadership!—but by a curious affable gesture signified to Miss Thaxted that he had only been waiting an opportunity to secure a seat near herself. It would never have done for Miss Thaxted to think that the Magician had any moral dominion over him, Abel Hipgood.

MISS THAXTED, in Abel's eyes, was by far the most important lady in the room. She was not staying at "Fairbourne," but had come in for the séance with sundry others from other boarding-houses at the suggestion of the missing Miss Tansley. Abel had made her acquaintance, through Miss Tansley, on a warm evening in the neighbourhood of the bandstand, and had instantly been struck by her handsomeness, her dignity, her finished manners, her smart clothes, and her slim ankles. So much so that he assumed a certain doggishness and remembered that he, a very eligible bachelor, had come to Exquay partly with the object of "looking out."

But he was ever suspicious of finished manners, finery, and especially of slim ankles. He rightly thought that they connoted expensive tastes and an imperfect appreciation of the true value of money. One day, however, Miss Thaxted, in a casual conversation concerning a proposed motor-coach expedition into the moors, had unconsciously shown to him that she had minutely studied the prices of such tours, and objected to either herself or anybody else paying seven-and-six a head when the same end could be obtained at six-and-six a head by a slightly different route. "What I say is," she had said, "a shilling is always a shilling," and had uttered this indubitable truth in a serious and quite unashamed tone, as one confessing a faith. Henceforward Mr. Hipgood had been perfectly reassured about her, and all her acquaintances and his knew that matters were slowly and correctly pursuing their normal course. Miss Thaxted was secretary and book-keeper to a fashionable dentist in Leeds—source of her finished manners.

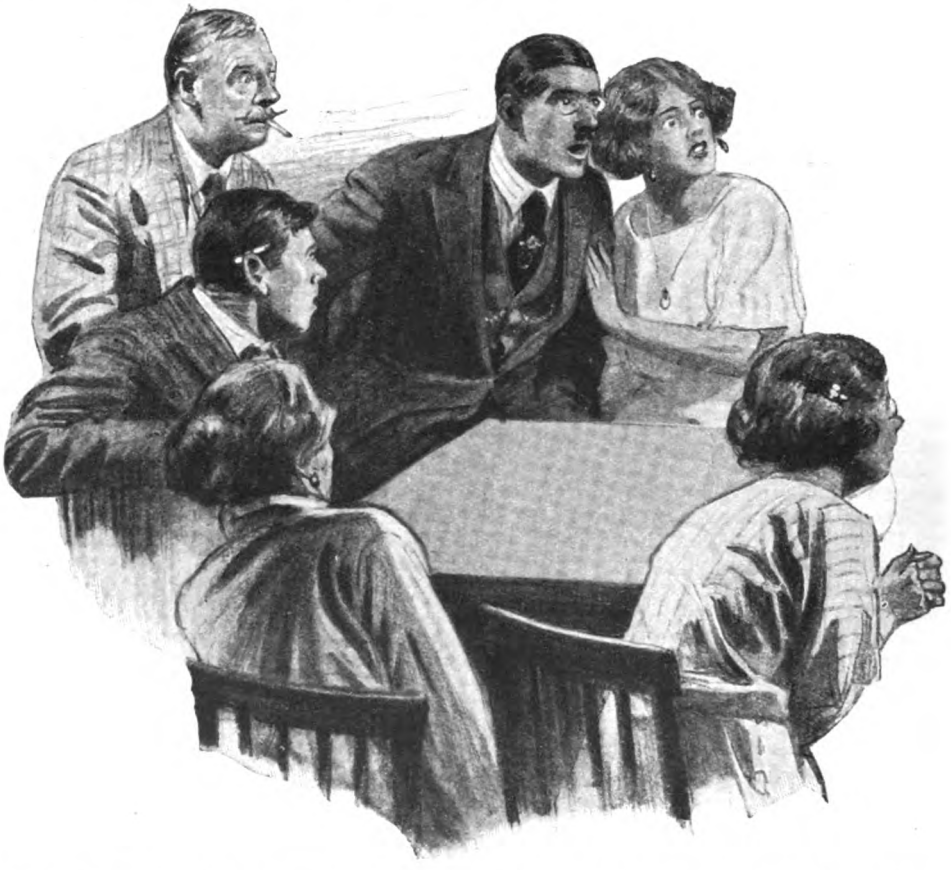
MR. MAGICIAN was gazing sternly into the crystal. Hearts throbbed with expectation. Mr. Hipgood hoped that Miss Thaxted would be the first to be called upon; he hoped further that everyone, except perhaps himself, would be asked to leave the room while the future was being revealed to Miss Thaxted. Indeed, with others, he was surprised that Mr. Magician had so far said not a word as to the arrangements which he usually made for securing privacy to individual clients.

"No!" said Mr. Magician, fiercely and startlingly looking up. "No! I should prefer to do nothing to-night. You must be good enough to let me exercise my discretion and—be dumb." He glanced around almost menacingly, his prominent moustache sticking out on either side of his firm lips.

"Oh! But——" cried Mr. Hipgood.

" We've heard so much about you. Surely you can——"

The hearts of several persons present were now in their mouths; they feared that Mr. Hipgood, too audacious, was inviting trouble. Clearly the Magician had seen trouble for some of them in the crystal, and if the future held unpleasantness they preferred to be spared foreknowledge of it. They were human, even if despicable, in their cowardice. They prayed in their secret bosoms that Mr. Magician would maintain his attitude—and they were disappointed.



" Very well, then! Very well!" said the crystal-gazer, quite blithely. " If you must have it! Five persons staying as visitors in this house to-night are about to be struck down by an extremely contagious disease —extremely contagious." And he gazed around for the second time, as it were cruelly triumphant. Then he shut up with a snap the box containing his crystal.

At the same moment, such is the power of suggestion, nearly everybody in the room felt a conviction that throughout the day he or she had been suffering from grave and mysterious symptoms of oncoming illness. All looked at all with a wild, questioning surmise.

" But may I inquire——?' the undaunted Mr. Hipgood began.

" I can say no more. That is all I have seen in the crystal, or can see."

In twenty seconds Mr. Magician had left the house.

" He hasn't asked for his fee!" exclaimed Mr. Hipgood, who had collected the amount of the fee and had it in his pocket.

" And what about his crystal?" Bertie Thaxted demanded.

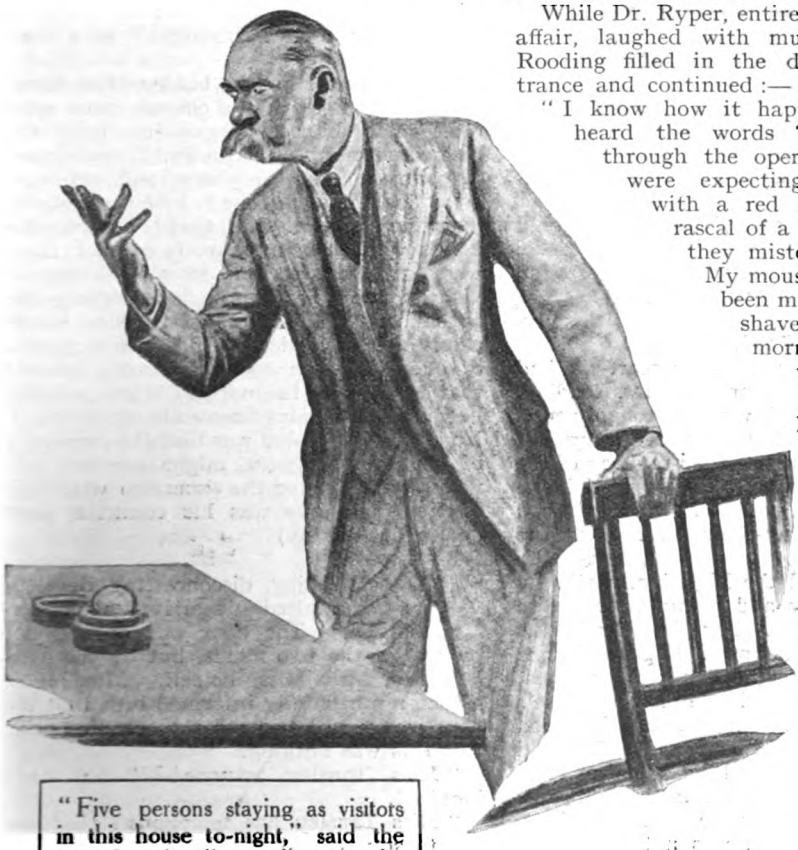
II.

THE scene is now the surgery of that very popular Exquay general practitioner, Dr. Cedric Ryper, M.R.C.P., M.R.C.S., ten minutes later. Dr. Ryper was sterilizing some surgical instruments and restoring them to their cases, when in walked quite unceremoniously a gentleman with a red moustache.

" Hullo, Rooding," said Dr. Ryper, turning

his head. "You've been quick enough, I will say! Do you deal with your own patients as rapidly?"

"*You've* got some deuced funny patients, my lad," said Dr. Rooding. "Believe me, I've had an adventure—yes, an adventure. Mind you, I'm not complaining. I accept



"Five persons staying as visitors in this house to-night," said the crystal-gazer, "are about to be struck down by an extremely contagious disease."

what comes. I offered to take that call for you, seeing how absurdly worried you were about that abscess case that blew in on you. And, by the way, I tell you again that you're over-working. However, that's your affair. Further, I'm thoroughly enjoying my holiday here in your house, though I must confess that Exquay is not in the least what it was when I left it nineteen years ago, and I keenly regret the change. But——"

"Is this an oration you're making, Jack?" Dr. Ryper interrupted.

"But," the red moustache proceeded implacably, "I do think it's a bit odd that when I arrive at the house I'm sent to I should be greeted as 'Mr. Magician' by a crowd of people evidently of the sort that have made Exquay what it is to-day—and then introduced to a crystal and expected to gaze into it! No time allowed for explanations. A complaisant ass with a startling tie-pin insisted on my getting to work at once with the blooming crystal."

While Dr. Ryper, entirely puzzled by this affair, laughed with much freedom, Dr. Rooding filled in the details of his entrance and continued:—

"I know how it happened, because I heard the words 'red moustache' through the open window. They were expecting somebody else with a red moustache, some rascal of a necromancer, and they mistook me for him. My moustache has always been my undoing, and I'd shave it off to-morrow morning if I wasn't too proud."

"But what did you *do*?"

"What did I do? I saw at once that several of 'em were sickening for mumps—couldn't miss seeing it—and so I prophesied that five of 'em would be struck down by a highly contagious disease—I thought I should be on the safe side in saying five—and then I just left."

"But, my dear charlatan, didn't you see Mrs. Miss?"

"Who's Mrs. Miss?"

"The keeper of the establishment, an old lady who wears an embroidered silk apron."

"No. I didn't see any old lady."

"But it was she who sent for me. I told you so."

"Did you indeed! Well, anyhow, I didn't see her. If you think she's in danger you'd better run along yourself—and explain."

"Nobody could explain what you've done," Dr. Ryper laughed, again in a rather unprofessional manner. "Here. Let's have a whisky-and-soda apiece."

"I never in my life saw such a collection of oddities," remarked Dr. Rooding, reflectively, over his whisky-and-soda.

"My dear Jack," Dr. Ryper reproved him, "there are no 'oddities' among the visitors to Exquay. They are all very respectable and very decent people, who pay their way, and they've made the town more truly prosperous than it ever was before. And don't you forget it. I'd like to know where I should be without them." He rang the bell. "Clara," he said to the maid, "phone for a taxi for me."

"Mistress has just come back with the car, sir."

"Oh, all right. I'll take it, then." And to his guest: "I've had several mumps these last few days. We may be in for an epidemic. But fancy adults helping themselves to it."

"Those adults at 'Fairbourne' would catch anything," said the red moustache. "I hope I've left them with the impression that it's smallpox they're in for."

III.

IN spite of the fact that his scarf-pin had not met with the approval of Dr. Rooding, Mr. Abel Hipgood was a thoroughly good fellow and full to the brim with sagacity. Of course he laughed at the prophecy of the Magician. He walked Miss Thaxted home to her lodging and laughed at the Magician's prophecy all the way—nor was the way the shortest way.

He thus derided the Magician, partly by reason of sagacity and partly in order to reassure Miss Bertie. For Miss Bertie was obviously somewhat upset. It goes without saying that she pretended not to be upset, and that she bravely joined in Mr. Hipgood's mirth. Still, she was upset. Mr. Hipgood casually pointed out that Miss Bertie could not possibly be affected by the prophecy, which was expressly confined to people staying at "Fairbourne" that night, whereas Miss Thaxted was not staying at "Fairbourne" either that night or any other night. To which Miss Bertie replied that the whole thing was in her eyes ridiculous, and she hoped that Mr. Hipgood did not for one moment imagine that she was taking it seriously. To which Mr. Hipgood replied that naturally he did not and that all he had said was purely jocular. Nevertheless Mr. Hipgood knew that Miss Bertie was indeed taking it seriously, and she knew that he knew.

You might suppose that this absurd irrational weakness of Miss Bertie's would lower her in his esteem. Not a bit! Quite the reverse! He liked her all the better for it. It demonstrated her true womanliness. It enabled him to give her some of his moral strength. It intensified his tender feelings towards her. She was a wonderful girl, at once stylish, lovely, prudent, sagacious, but she simply had to have some frailty—otherwise would she not have been unlovable?—and this particular frailty was delicious in the sight of Mr. Hipgood.

So that his attitude to her during the longish walk was adorable and did credit to both of them. And at her door they clinched a proposal for making an excursion together on the morrow—an excursion which should start early and end late. And Mr. Hipgood set off alone for "Fairbourne" in a most romantic mood.

But no sooner had he bidden Miss Bertie a soft good night than a change came upon him. He himself began to take the Magician's prophecy seriously. Preposterous, of course, such a prophecy, and yet——! *What* contagious disease? *Five* persons, the magician had said. Odd, that! Because, the holiday season being scarcely opened, there were only six persons in all staying as visitors at "Fairbourne," including the absent Miss Tansley. Miss Tansley would surely return to sleep, which left a margin of one. Mr. Hipgood comforted himself that he would be the margin. It was not that he feared contagious diseases in the abstract. No! What he feared was that the onslaught of contagious disease might prevent him from accomplishing the excursion with Miss Bertie. (Rapidly was his common sense ebbing out of him.)

AND astonishing, disconcerting developments awaited his arrival at "Fairbourne." The door was opened not by one of the two maids, but by the aged landlady, Mrs. Miss, herself. Mrs. Miss's glance reproachfully informed him that the hour was very late for a respectable house. But this was nothing.

"Miss Tansley returned?" he airily inquired.

"Miss Tansley has telephoned that she has to stay the night with friends at Plymouth."

Mr. Hipgood gave no sign, but he was thunderstruck. The margin of safety had vanished away. Five persons staying that night as visitors in the house were to be stricken down, and there would be only five visitors—including himself! Therefore he was doomed. Grotesque notion! But he could not shake it off.

And this too was nothing.

"I'm sorry to say," Mrs. Miss went on, "I've had to have the doctor in. I thought one of my maids was sickening for mumps, so I sent for the doctor. They've both got it. And what's more, Mr. and Mrs. Benbow and Miss Tweedie and Mr. Belfield have all got it. They're all in bed now, of course, and being poulticed."

"Mumps, eh? Glad it's no worse," Mr. Hipgood murmured, feebly, staggered by

the marvellous and terrible fulfilment of the Magician's prophecy.

"No worse?" repeated Mrs. Miss, hurt, and fidgeting with her apron. "It could hardly be worse for me, Mr. Hipgood. And I must ask you to kindly overlook any little shortcomings there may be in the service to-morrow morning."

Mr. Hipgood gave a very polite and sympathetic reply. He was about to mention the Magician, but fortunately refrained. Had he done so he would have added to the mental disturbance of the old lady, who knew nothing whatever of the Magician's visit. Nobody had had the courage to refer to it in her presence.

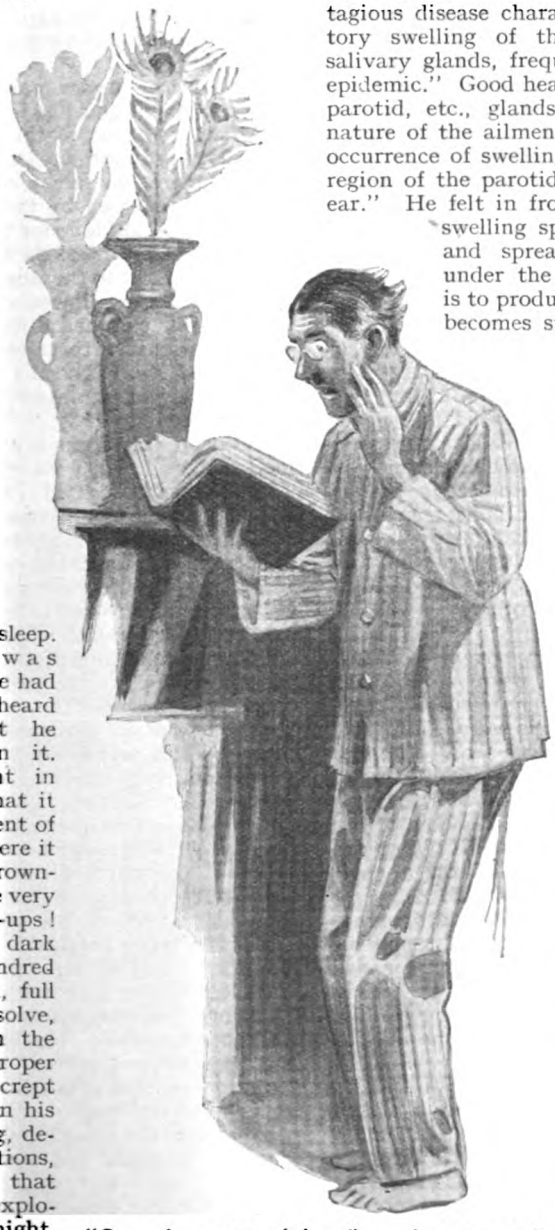
Mr. Hipgood retired to bed.

IV.

BUT not to sleep. What was mumps? He had of course often heard of mumps, but he had never seen it. He had thought in his ignorance that it was a mere ailment of infancy. And here it was attacking grown-ups. It might be very grave in grown-ups! He lay in the dark for about a hundred hours, and then, full of a desperate resolve, arose, turned on the light, and with proper precautions crept down the stairs in his pyjamas, making, despite the precautions, creaking noises that sounded like explosions in the night. And so to the dining-room, which smelt of stale food.

On some shelves in a corner of the dining-room he had noticed an old edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica—a relic of Mrs. Miss's more opulent married days. He found the right volume, after opening two wrong ones, and, his chill feet on the bare linoleum, scanned the article entitled "Mumps."

"Parotitis." A serious word! "A contagious disease characterized by inflammatory swelling of the parotid and other salivary glands, frequently occurring as an epidemic." Good heavens! Where *were* the parotid, etc., glands? ". . . Soon the nature of the ailment is announced by the occurrence of swelling and stiffening in the region of the parotid gland in front of the ear." He felt in front of his ears. "The swelling speedily increases in size and spreads downwards . . . under the jaw. . . . The effect is to produce disfigurement, which becomes still greater should the inflammation spread, as often happens, to the glands at the other side of the neck and face." Disfigurement! "Pain. . . . Febrile symptoms. . . . Suppuration. . . . Interference with mastication and swallowing. . . . Four or five days. . . ."



"Soon the nature of the ailment is announced by the occurrence of swelling and stiffening in the region of the parotid gland in front of the ear." He felt in front of his ears.

He heard a noise across the hall in the drawing-room. Mrs. Miss was afoot and after him! He felt like a criminal. He shut the horrid volume and padded upstairs again as rapidly as he could.

Back in his bedroom, he examined himself in the glass. Swelling? Yes! No! Yes! Had he not had febrile symptoms during the day? Yes! No! Yes! He made the motion of swallowing. Did it cause him pain? Certainly! He was without doubt ill, and with disfiguring mumps. To-morrow, instead of an excursion—poultices! He thought he had better keep warm, and so slipped

into bed, and put his head under the clothes.

What made him arise again within two minutes? A strange noise? A premonition? A mysterious warning? He could not say; but being very matter-of-fact he put it down to a strange noise. This time, before going downstairs, he donned his dressing-gown; on the other hand he did not turn on the staircase lights. From the darkness of the hall and the back-hall he saw a thin slit of light in the doorway of the small room (behind the drawing-room) which was Mrs. Miss's private apartment, the chamber where she kept her books of account, held delicate interviews with boarders or servants, and, presumably, stored her money. And he heard unusual half-muffled sounds in this room.

He very quietly pushed open the door, which had been ajar, and peeped, and saw a man busy with the bottom drawer of Mrs. Miss's old-fashioned bureau-desk, in the corner by the window. The man was taking out of the drawer a cash-box. Mr. Hipgood could not say that he looked like a burglar because Mr. Hipgood had never seen a burglar; nor could he be sure that burglars as a class had any distinguishing appearance peculiar to themselves. But he at once leapt to the justifiable conclusion that the fellow, whose clothes might have been those of a clerk in, say, a wholesale fruiterer's establishment, was indeed a burglar. He could be no other.

THE situation had no terrors whatever for Mr. Hipgood, who forgot even his parotid gland. In such a pass Mr. Hipgood was at his very best. He was incapable of physical fear. He had powerful muscles. And in moments of crisis he would keep all his wits and his brain worked admirably. The joy of life burned bright in Mr. Hipgood. What did he do? Spring? Shout? Throw a chair with unerring aim? Not at all. He first quietly withdrew the cord of his dressing-gown from its loops and hung it round his neck. Then like a panther he crept forward to his prey, and, as the prey turned in alarm, he dashed at him and clasped him by the neck with both hands. The burglar gave an awful yell of pain.

"Loose my neck, guv'nor, and I'll stand quiet," the burglar breathed in a stifled voice, his arms limp.

But Mr. Hipgood only gripped him the tighter; whereupon the burglar collapsed, a mere carcass, on the floor. Mr. Hipgood then let go of the neck and tied the man's hands behind his back with the cord of the dressing-gown. Mr. Hipgood knew how to make knots; in his apprenticed youth he had often had to tie two short ladders together to form a long one, and no operation calls for more secure knots. The burglar was helpless. (If Dr. Rooding with the red moustache could have seen Mr. Hipgood in this moment he might have altered his disdainful opinion of Northern visitors to Exquay.)

"My neck's that tender!" moaned desperately the defeated burglar. "Give me a drink, for Gawd's sake, or I shall faint right off."

Now in the upper part of Mrs. Miss's bureau—the burglar had let down the flap—stood shyly in one of the compartments a small bottle of brandy. Doubtless Mrs. Miss kept it there for great emergencies. Mr. Hipgood, impressed by the burglar's pallor, and not at all anxious for the burglar to die on his hands, uncorked the bottle and unceremoniously put it to the lips of the plunderer. The plunderer swallowed some brandy—but with obvious pain and difficulty!

The glorious truth suddenly and blindly illuminated Mr. Hipgood's mind.

"You've got mumps!" he cried, with joy overflowing.

"Copped 'em from my young woman," the burglar agreed, weakly.

Mr. Hipgood ceased in an instant to feel any of the symptoms of mumps. He had no longer the slightest sense of discomfort in the indicated regions of the face and neck. He was, in two words, perfectly well. The menace was lifted. He could now interpret the oracle, who, like the oracles of old, must be interpreted strictly. "*Five persons staying as visitors in this house to-night.*" Those were the exact words; Mr. Hipgood was in no danger of forgetting them. Four persons staying in the house as visitors were already "down" with the inconvenient disease. The fifth was clearly the burglar. Two questions arose as to the burglar. First, could he be described as a visitor? To which the answer was that he could not possibly be described otherwise than as a visitor. An unwelcome visitor. That was it. Everybody would naturally describe him as an unwelcome visitor. Unwelcome—but a visitor! Second, was he "staying" in the house? Well, the point was easily settled. He was in the house, and Mr. Hipgood himself personally undertook to see that the fellow stayed in the house until morning.

Thus were the five victims accounted for—and Mr. Hipgood not among them! Mr. Hipgood could not by any chance be a victim, because that would have raised the number to six, and the oracle had distinctly said five.

The oracle now enjoyed a terrific prestige in the esteem of Mr. Hipgood. He had proved to be so miraculously, so dazzlingly,

so incomprehensibly right that he could not conceivably be wrong in any detail. The oracle of the red moustache had in fact destroyed all Mr. Hipgood's scepticism concerning the mystical powers of seers and discoverers of the future. Henceforth he was a believer, and prepared to fight and defeat sceptics out of his own vouched-for personal experience. New horizons opened out for Mr. Hipgood.

"YOU seem quite pleased I've had a burglary, Mr. Hipgood," said Mrs. Miss when, a little later, she was fetched down to view the captive. "But I can assure you it's all very upsetting for an old woman like me. And no servants and all! And no sleep either!" Mrs. Miss whimpered.

"I can assure you I'm not!" answered Mr. Hipgood, clasping his dressing-gown more closely around him. "I'm only pleased I managed to catch him for you before he could get away or even do any damage."

"I thank you kindly," said Mrs. Miss, tardily giving justice to her star boarder.

But Mrs. Miss's first remark was true enough. Mr. Hipgood *was* delighted that she had had a burglar, and he could not conceal his delight—would be at no pains to conceal it.

Two policemen, summoned by telephone, arrived at seven o'clock, by which time Mr. Hipgood had had a little sleep.

"There's a police-court this morning, as it happens," said one of the policemen to him. "Of course you'll attend as a witness, sir."

"I shall do no such thing!" exclaimed Mr. Hipgood, offended.

"But you must, sir."

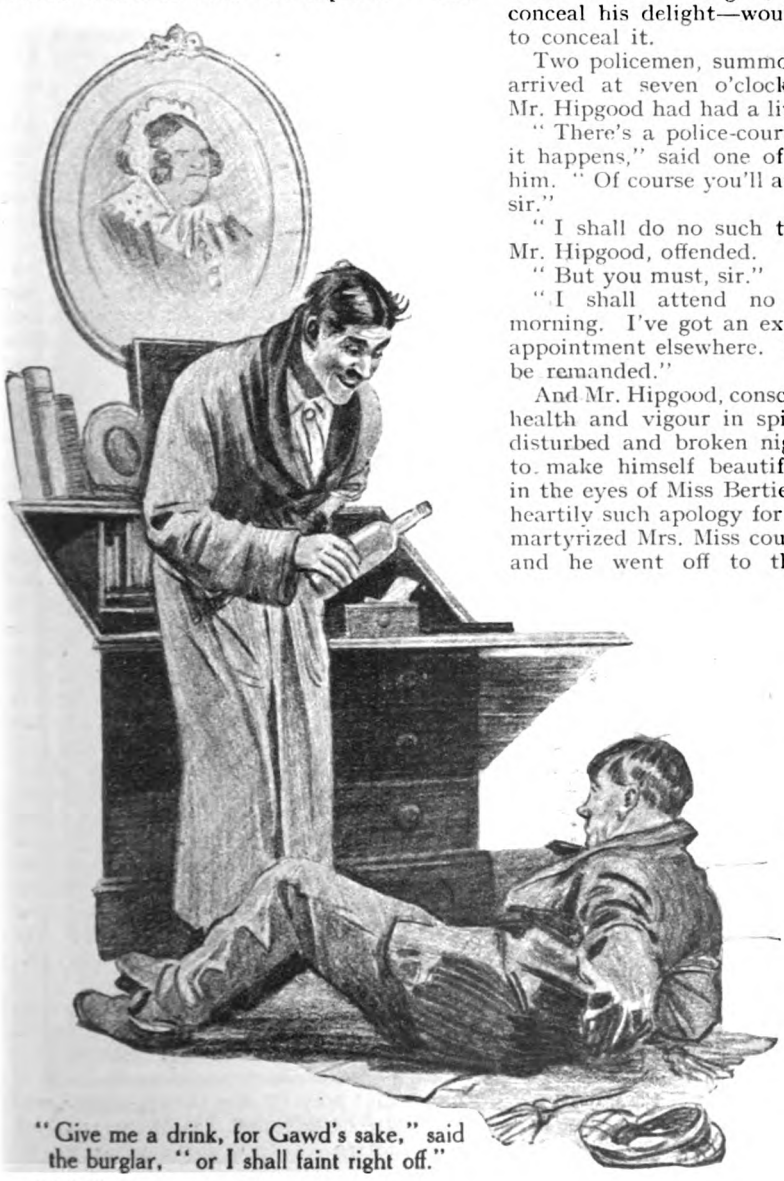
"I shall attend no police-court this morning. I've got an extremely important appointment elsewhere. The prisoner must be remanded."

And Mr. Hipgood, conscious of magnificent health and vigour in spite of a somewhat disturbed and broken night, went upstairs to make himself beautiful and impressive in the eyes of Miss Bertie Thaxted. He ate heartily such apology for a breakfast as the martyrized Mrs. Miss could put before him, and he went off to the boarding-house which was honoured by the bright presence of his angel. There was some delay in answering the door, but Mr. Hipgood did not notice it, for he was dreaming of the *tête-à-tête* excursion.

"Are you Mr. Hipgood?" the maid inquired.

"I am."

"Miss Thaxted's very sorry, sir, but she's got mumps and won't be able to see anyone for four or five days."



"Give me a drink, for Gawd's sake," said the burglar, "or I shall faint right off."

Pear Tree Cottage

By

ALBERT KINROSS

Illustrated by
ELIZABETH EARNSHAW

I.

THIS story really begins when Elsie Huddert jumped the fence and landed in Parr's Orchard. No jump, no story. She was a clean-bred, freckled girl of twenty-five, neither plain nor good-looking, neither smart nor dowdy. She struck a path and continued, feeling quite sure that this was the way to the Elmsford Road. The path, however, led to a meadow, and next to Pear Tree Cottage and Mrs. Graham-Wilkinson, and after these—Romance.

She had looked over the gate of Pear Tree Cottage and admired the tiny place and its blaze of garden, her delicate nose in raptures, her eyes alight, her heart covetous, till a lady stepped out of the house and caught her; a proud, erect, slim lady, who, coming closer and closer, grew older and older, till she came quite close; and then Elsie could see that, although she carried herself so well and had such a youthful figure, she was truly old.

This old lady regarded her fiercely, and Elsie would have turned away; but, "What do you want?" asked the old lady, and Elsie answered, "The Elmsford Road."

"You're a stranger?"

"Yes; I live in London."

"And what are you doing here?"

"I've been for a tramp; I love the country."

"Do you?" said the old lady; "and how do you like my cottage?"

"It's heavenly," said Elsie Huddert.

That was how it started, and the old lady was Mrs. Graham-Wilkinson, who was fierce and poor and proud, and who wanted to get away from Pear Tree Cottage for a month and go to the seaside; and would Elsie Huddert like to take it, just as it stood, for two guineas a week, with plate and linen?

Elsie could manage it for a month, but no longer. By now she was safe inside and sitting on a speckless chair in a speckless living-room, and she had explained who she was and her circumstances, which were not so very different from Mrs. Graham-Wilkinson's. But she hadn't a cottage of her own and a garden—she wished she had! She had a small private income and she lived in a boarding-house on the north side of Hyde Park. And out of her little income the boarding-house swallowed two pounds twelve-and-six a week, her laundry bill and "extras" demolished the rest, so that if she needed more money she had to work.

"What kind of work?" asked Mrs. Graham-Wilkinson.

"I write for the papers," answered Elsie Huddert, meaning to say that she wrote little paragraphs which she sent round and round, and for which she sometimes got as much as five shillings, or even seven-and-six, and once a year she turned out a regular article, inquiring why men preferred women who were shallow and frivolous to those who were deep and simple. This was a safe three guineas.

"So you're a lady?" said Mrs. Graham-Wilkinson. That point seemed to matter very much. "And if I let you have the cottage you won't tell anybody it's for money? It's no business of theirs." She sat erect and defiant. "I've no friends here," she added; "but you know these country people and how they talk. The cottage is my own and I can do what I like with it; I'm not answerable to them. You can say you're a relative if anybody asks you, and I'll tell Mrs. Matthews. You can have her if you want her—I give her five shillings. And you'll come on the first of August and stay till the twenty-eighth, and you'll pay in advance. Is there anything I've forgotten?"

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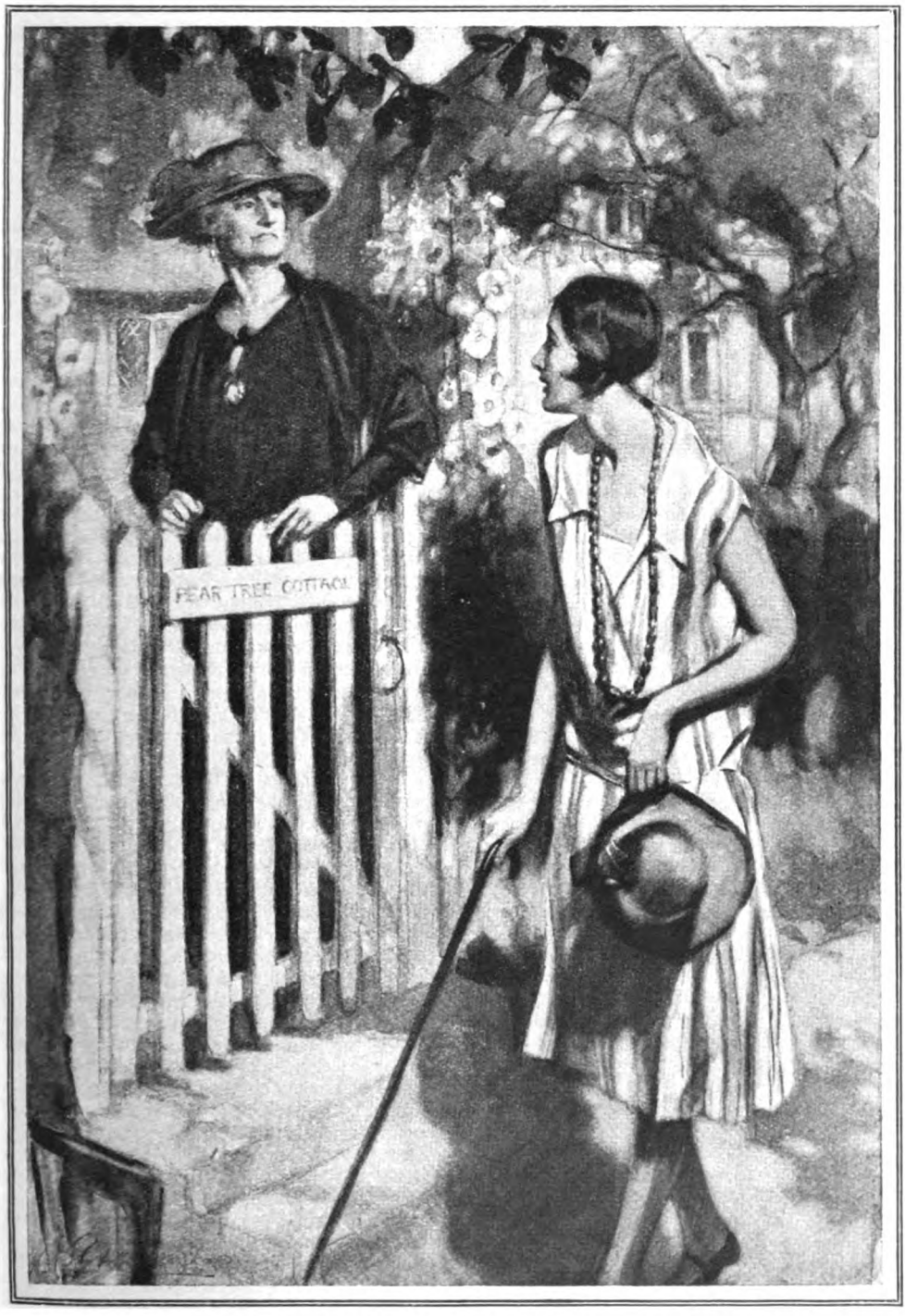


The old lady regarded her fiercely. "What do you want?" she asked.

" I could give you references," said Elsie Huddert.

" I'm no fool," said Mrs. Graham-Wilkinson ; and then, " You're like me, alone in the world, aren't you ? "

" Yes," said Elsie Huddert.

Mrs. Graham-Wilkinson's old eyes hardened. " I had a son, but he wouldn't stay with me " ; and here she ended.

Elsie was not surprised. She rose politely and held out a hand, and Mrs. Graham-Wilkinson, who might have offered her a cup of tea, saw her to the gate instead.

That was how it started ; and every year for three years afterwards Elsie Huddert took the cottage and Mrs. Matthews from down the lane came in to help ; and there was nothing in writing and no witnesses, and always Mrs. Graham-Wilkinson cheated, but it didn't matter. The good things would be locked away and only the third-best rubbish left out, cracked plates, patched sheets, and worn cutlery. And so it went on for three years every August, till one morning a tall police-sergeant rode up on his motor-bicycle and asked to see Miss Huddert.

Mrs. Matthews showed him in.

" There's nothing for you to be alarmed about," he began ; and Elsie, whose conscience was quite clear and spotless, said, " I'm not alarmed."

" Well, it's about Mrs. Graham-Wilkinson, and perhaps I ought to break it to you. She's dead ; and as you're her only relative we've heard tell of, we suppose you'll look after her. We got a wire from Hythe."

Elsie understood. She said " Thank you," and the police-sergeant rode off again.

THAT evening she was down at Hythe, a little seaside place on the Kentish coast, and as there seemed to be nobody else whose business it was, she saw the doctor and ordered the funeral, and Mrs. Graham-Wilkinson was duly buried in the uphill cemetery behind the parish church. That cost thirty-two pounds twelve shillings and ninepence, and there was only eleven pounds in Mrs. Graham-Wilkinson's trunk and fourteen and fivepence-halfpenny in her purse, and Elsie's own out-of-pocket expenses came to close on five pounds. She decided to return to Pear Tree Cottage and to stay there till some real authoritative person came along who would settle everything.

II.

FOUR years later Elsie Huddert was still at Pear Tree Cottage and still waiting. Nobody at all had come along and she had grown to love the little place, which seemed like her very own now. All the good things had been taken out of trunks and drawers and cupboards, glass and plate and china, and she had bought new linen and thick blankets ; and the garden was a picture, and there was a dog called Dan, and a little maid who could eat a whole treacle pudding. How long was it going to last, she sometimes wondered ? And meanwhile, when friends came down and stayed with her, " I wish somebody would die and leave *me* a cottage ! " they used to say ; but Elsie only smiled at them. For they knew nothing of Darcy Graham-Wilkinson and how one day he would walk in and find her.

The years had simply trickled through her fingers ; a house and a garden are like two children—so many things to do for them. And she had given up writing paragraphs for the papers, about dress and fashions and people and toilet hints and what not, and, instead, she had done what she had often wanted to do, sat down and written a real novel which had been published. It was about two women and a man, and one of the women was shallow and frivolous and the other was deep and simple ; yet it was the quiet girl who got him in the end. " They don't often," thought Elsie Huddert ; but on paper she could do as she pleased. She made sixty-two pounds thirteen and sixpence out of the book, and it went into a second edition ; and now she had begun one about Darcy Graham-Wilkinson, who might come here at any moment and find her in his cottage.

Years ago he had quarrelled with his mother and run away from her. Such a quarrel ! It was rather terrible. There had been the quarrel and Darcy had run away to sea and stayed there, and after that Mrs. Graham-Wilkinson had sold her stocks and shares and bought Pear Tree Cottage and an annuity. Of course the old lady hadn't told her, though a flicker of it had crept into their first meeting ; but after waiting and waiting for somebody to come who never came, Elsie had turned out every drawer and read every letter and paper and document there was in Pear Tree Cottage.

It had been a curious experience to probe thus into the secrets of the defenceless dead, and sometimes, late at night, looking through these yellowed pages, Elsie had felt frightened, as though half expecting that Mrs. Graham-Wilkinson would catch her. But now she was busy with her novel about Darcy, who would come back and find her there—it was a wonderful situation. She looked in the glass sometimes. She was still freckled, but the good clean life, the quiet and peace and regularity, had completed her, and to-day she might be called a handsome woman.

III.

ELSIE knew him at once as he came in at the gate on a sunny April afternoon, just about tea-time. Clean-shaven, tanned, blue-eyed, the face of a sailor; and not too tall, and rather square about the shoulder. It was exactly as she had pictured him.

He knocked at the door and she opened it. He removed his cap, and he had crisp, fair hair, slightly greying; and that was exactly right as well.

"Come in," she said. "It's your cottage, and you're Mr. Darcy Graham-Wilkinson, for whom I've been waiting."

He stood there in a blue flannel suit and took her in, and she felt that, perhaps, she had been a trifle too friendly and forthcoming; but he was not at all embarrassed, or cross, or suspicious, or any of the things she had sometimes feared he might be.

"You'll have the easy-chair," she said.

"No, it's yours," he answered, smiling.

"But they're all yours, except that one. I bought it."

He seemed amused at her vivacity, her hearty welcome; but it was a scene she had been through dozens and dozens of times. In the novel it began like that, she doing most of the talking, while he was strong and rather silent. She liked men who were silent.

He sat up in his chair and looked at her as though he enjoyed it, as though this return were ever so much better than anything he had expected.

"Of course, I know a good deal about you," she had run on; "I couldn't very well help myself. I had to go through all her letters."

He was quick and shrewd. She could see his mind working.

"Was there any will?" he asked, suddenly. "That's the main thing."

"I've never been able to find one. Naturally, if I had——" And next she told him the whole story, beginning where it had started, and how the tall police-sergeant had ridden up on his motor-bicycle, and how, there being nobody else, she had stepped in and buried Mrs. Graham-Wilkinson and waited. "Of course, it wasn't my business," she ended, "but what could I do?"

He nodded understandingly.

"It was very good of you, extraordinarily good," he said, simply.

"Anybody else would have done the same."

"I wouldn't, for one," he answered.

"And, besides, she would insist on telling people that I was a relative. Everybody here believes it."

"And so we're cousins or something," he said, his blue eyes twinkling in his tanned face under the crinkly hair

The tiny maid came in with the tea, and over the cups Elsie gave him a full and true account of all her stewardship; how she had paid the rates and taxes, and how the things that were worn and broken had been replaced and the leak in the roof mended; and when that was done with she stopped short, for it was his turn now; but, instead of thanking her or claiming rent or asking when she proposed to go, "I'll think it over," he said, grown matter-of-fact and rather formal. "It's a bit of a business. I'll think it over, and perhaps I'll want the place. May I come in to-morrow, and then we'll see?"

He rose and held out a hand and looked at her with those clear eyes of his which were steely blue now, and she saw him to the door and watched him go down the little path to the gate, and next she hated him.

For he had come there to turn her out, hadn't he? That was the real meaning of his visit. After all these years of leisure and security and peace. She saw herself back again, in one room, in another cheap boarding-house, writing her little paragraphs and sending them round and round. And her novel was only half-finished and might never get done at all now, and there was Violet, the tiny maid, and Dan, the dog. It would be hard to give them up, and hardest of all to give up Pear Tree Cottage. She went down the path with its gay border of tulips and wallflowers and forget-me-nots. She turned and looked at the house itself. Suddenly it had gathered a new beauty, a new warmth, a new delight, as she saw it with eyes that no longer took its shelter for granted. Perhaps he would sell it to her, but that would eat up one-third of her income; and he might claim five years' rent, and that would make it the half. She could hardly go on with it. She would have to give it up and return to the old ground whence she had started. Or she might play the minx and set out to capture him. Some girls would. There was that wretch Fanny, who had invaded her first book and been defeated. *She* would have tried to get him. Heavy-hearted, she went indoors and rang for Violet and played with Dan and took up her unfinished novel. Should she burn it? But though she hated him, she didn't hate him as much as that.

IV.

HE came in next day at the same hour.

"Well," she greeted him, "have you made up your mind?"

"Yes," he said, "I have"; and he looked at her fair and square.

"What is it?" she asked.

" I'm not going back ; I'm going to stay in England."

" That means I'll have to quit ? "

" Does it ? "

He was sitting easily, in her best chair, his face alive with a serene contentment ; and Elsie was feeling that she would like to shake him.

" Do you know," he said, suddenly, " I haven't sat like this with a white woman, a real white woman, for years and years. Not really white."

" But aren't you a sailor ? " she asked.

" I gave that up ages ago ; I'm a planter now. We grow coffee and bananas ; and it's years since I've been to Europe ; and here I stay," he repeated ; and next he asked her to tell him about her life. " You know, all this is rather wonderful to me," he ended, " I've been out of it so long."

Elsie told him a good deal. She came to the first novel, and then to the second novel. Somehow he seemed to draw her confidences. He had a way. And when she stopped, " You'd better finish your book," he said, judicially ; " you'd better keep on till that's done. What about it ? "

Elsie's heart leapt up. " It's awfully good of you ! " she answered.

" I am good," he said, laughing ; and Elsie thought, " I believe you are."

" Then you don't hate me any longer ? " he asked next.

" How did you know ? "

" I should have done ; anybody coming here and upsetting everything—I should have hated them like poison ! "

They sat on talking till he rose to go. He held out a hand, and her heart leapt to her eyes now ; for Elsie was like that, deep of feeling and rather simple. And next their lips met, as well as their eyes. All of a sudden.

It had just happened, quite wonderfully and rightly. He had taken her, reached out and taken her, and she had gone to him. And it wasn't a bit that way in the book. There they had waited and waited ; and kisses——

" But we've really known one another nearly five years," she had whispered when it was over.

" One for each year," he answered ; and he would have collected the rest, but there was a ring at the bell, a knock at the living-room door, and Violet, the tiny maid, came in with : " Please, miss, it's Mrs. Hooker from the Vicarage and Miss Champion ; I see'd them from the scullery window. And please, miss——"

Elsie was expecting them.

" Visitors ? " he asked.

" Two old ladies."

" Frumps ? "

" Your mother used to have rows with them. And now you must go," she ended, " you really must—and come back again to-morrow."

V.

NEXT morning Elsie awoke with an idea. Instead of sitting at home and waiting, she would hire Allchin's car and drive over to the Swan Hotel at Elmsford, where he was staying, and they could take a run round the country. There were places she longed to show him—Wyvern Moat and Angley Woods ; and he, who had been away from England such a while, would love to see it in its April glory. And, besides, it was so many years since she had been in love—so many years.

In goggles and fur overcoat and veil, she set out that forenoon in her hired car, overtaking the bus that ran to Elmsford, overtaking most things, her heart alight, her spirits mounting. At eleven o'clock she was in the town. She crossed the bridge and stopped before the Swan Hotel. She was going to surprise him.

In the wide lounge she found a porter, and there was a young lady at the desk.

" Is Mr. Graham-Wilkinson in ? " she asked. " He's staying here."

The porter reflected.

" Mr. Darcy Graham-Wilkinson," said Elsie.

" There's nobody of that name here," said the porter, and the young lady, who had been listening, confirmed this.

" But he's been here three days," Elsie insisted ; " a clean-shaven gentleman, very sunburnt, from abroad."

" That's Mr. Probert," said the porter.

" Blue eyes and crisp, crinkly hair ? " asked the young lady.

" Yes," said Elsie.

" That's Mr. Probert. There's three letters for him in the rack—came by the second post."

" And a telegram, one of those foreign ones," put in the porter, " from somewhere abroad. He went out just now to get his hair cut ; I told him who was the best barber."

" I'll wait," said Elsie.

She crossed over to the letter-rack that stood close to the swing-doors and found three envelopes addressed to " H. B. Probert, Esq.," and a cablegram addressed to " Probert " ; and then she seated herself in an uncomfortable wicker chair and waited.

" That's Mr. Probert ; he's just come in, miss." The porter was standing at her elbow.

" Thanks," said Elsie. She looked across the lounge—she looked again. Yes, it was Darcy Graham-Wilkinson, or the man whom

He was sitting easily, in her best chair, his face alive with a serene contentment; and Elsie was feeling that she would like to shake him.

she knew as such. She sat up in her veil and motoring kit and watched him.

She saw him go to the rack and take the letters and the cablegram; and, next, the hot tears in her eyes, she had fled from the hotel, down the steps, and into her car, and anywhere, so long as she got away from him. The man—her man—was an impostor, a cheat, who had passed himself off as Darcy Graham-Wilkinson.

She reached home and thought it all out. He was after Pear Tree Cottage, and she was ashamed of herself and humbled. She had accepted him, just accepted him, without asking, without any proof. Why, anybody might come along and say that they were Darcy Graham-Wilkinson! Most likely he was some scoundrel who had taken his chance, got hold of the truth about her and the cottage. She recalled now how impulsive she had been, just asking for trouble and making it ever so easy. He had only knocked at her door, and at once she had opened it and said, "Come in, and you're Mr. Darcy Graham-Wilkinson"; and next she had told him everything, poured it all out; and, of course, he being so unscrupulous—why, it was almost an invitation! The rest had followed; and he had dared to make love to her. But now—she wouldn't give up without a struggle, without a fight, if need be. He would have to prove who he was, bring real evidence, before she would surrender a jot to him; and he had had the impertinence to say that she could stay there! . . . She had thought she would be out for lunch, so they hadn't ordered anything, and she could only find cold meat, and scraps and ends, the same as Violet and Dan.

SHE was sitting at table when a car drew up, one of the Elmsford taxis. She saw him pay the driver. Her heart beat as she watched him. But Elsie was firm, and cool and calm. She sent Violet back to the kitchen.

She opened the door herself; and he was smiling at her—actually smiling!

"I ought to have told you before," he began; "I would have done yesterday, only those two old ladies came in and interrupted. And now you've found me out," he laughed; "it's no good trying to stop me, I'm going to finish. Sit down, Elsie; it's your cottage—look here—and here!"

He had placed two cablegrams before her. "The first is only a copy," he said; "it's the one I sent to Darcy on Monday. He's my partner out there, and he'd asked me to make inquiries. He thought that perhaps he might be able to do something for the old lady."

Elsie had read the first cablegram, which was a copy.

"*Old lady dead,*" she had read. "*Left Pear Tree Cottage behind her. Present occupant future Mrs. Probert.*"

"You sent this on Monday, straightaway?" she asked.

"I fell in love with you straightaway, didn't I? And here's Darcy's answer. It came this morning."

Elsie read the second cablegram, the one that had been waiting for him in the rack at the hotel.

"*Congratulations. Keep Pear Tree Cottage and contents,*" it said. "*My wedding present to you both.*—DARCY."

The mists were clearing.

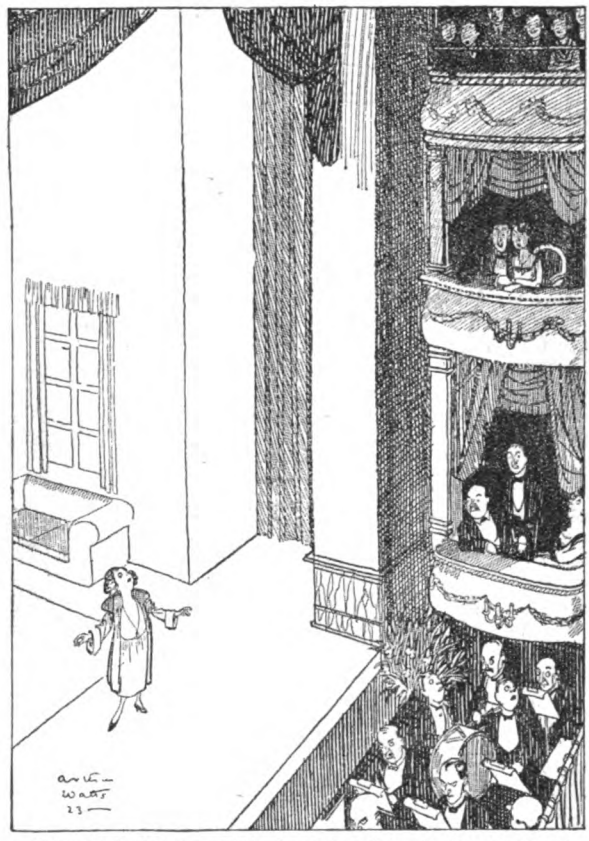
"But why didn't you tell me who you were at once?" she asked.

"I wanted to come back again and win you. I wanted to make friends. Would you have allowed it, or could I have come if I'd only been Hugh Probert? It would have been a five minutes' business-chat, and then good-bye. And so, when you thought I was Darcy——"

"I prefer Hugh," Elsie had whispered; "I always did think Darcy a wee bit—soft."

Humours of the Theatre

FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE CURTAIN



Distressed Heroine: "Ah—I must end it all—but where can I buy poison?"
Voice from the Audience: "You try the bar of this theatre, missie."

By permission of "London Opinion."

Comedian (who has been instructed to modify his humour to suit the taste of a select audience at the local theatre): "There you are. Not a laugh. This is wot comes of your 'Funny without bein' Vulgar.'"

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch"

Stage Manager (to comic): "I say, you can't wear that moustache."
Comic: "Why not?"
Stage Manager: "Well, that's one of the chorus dresses for the Hawaiian scene."

By permission of the "Performer."

Young Critic (as villain gets shot for making love to hero's wife): "And quite right, too."

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

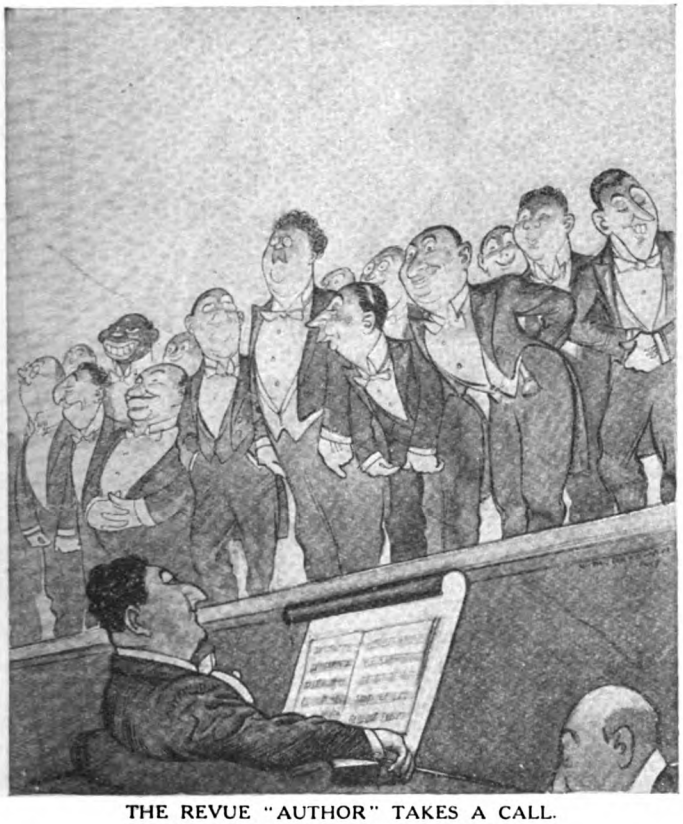
DRESSING THE PART.

Visitor (behind the scenes): "And what is that lady, an equestrian?"
Manager: "Oh, no; she just brings on a rabbit for the conjurer."

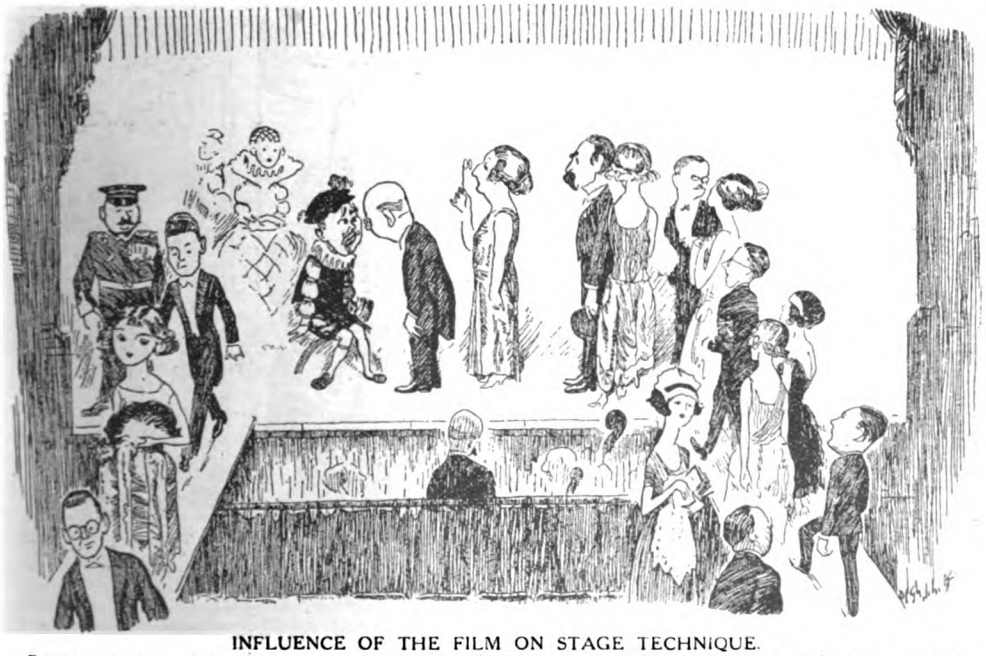
By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

The Entertainer: "If any lady or gentleman in the audience will call out the name of some female character in Shakespeare, I will endeavour to portray that character."
A Voice: "Florence Nightingale."
The Entertainer: "I said Shakespeare, sir, not Dickens."

By permission of "The Humorist."



THE REVUE "AUTHOR" TAKES A CALL.



INFLUENCE OF THE FILM ON STAGE TECHNIQUE.

Bringing up the audience one at a time to get a "close-up" view of the hero's face at a dramatic moment.

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

INNOVATION AT THE PANTOMIME.

"Look here, Miss Bloomville—what about a bit of *novelty* in this scene? I want you to enter riding on the moke. Do you think you can do it?"

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

THE WORM TURNS.

A juggler's comic assistant refuses to muff his tricks.

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

AT THE SIGN OF THE JADE FISH

By

EDGAR JEPSON

Illustrated by
JACK M. FAULKS

IT was in Park Street, Camden Town, that young Dr. Hassendean had established his surgery, on the first floor of a small house not far from the Regent's Park end of the street. On that floor, besides his surgery and his waiting-room, were his bed-sitting-room and kitchen-bathroom. A staircase, for the exclusive use of himself and his visitors, ran down from them to the street.

Young Dr. Hassendean had set up in practice on that first floor with great hopes but small capital, and things were not going well. Nevertheless, he was paying his way. At the end of sixteen weeks he was as well-off as when he started; on every day of the last ten weeks he had been confident that his luck was about to change. His luck had not justified that confidence. But his admirable cheerfulness remained unabated by this churlishness, and when at half-past nine that Thursday night he shut up his surgery and made ready to enjoy himself after his day's work, he was in as good spirits as if he had been earning ten guineas an hour.

It was his habit to betake himself, after working hours, to the bright, but decorous, Mirandola Club, the younger members of which danced while the older discussed the last thing in Culture. There he would find his favourite dancing-partner, the young and beautiful sister of John Walton, a cultivated young stockbroker who lived on the nearer slope of the northern heights. Miss Mary Walton and young Dr. Hassendean danced together admirably and they were interested in much the same things: lawn tennis, musical comedy, and the films. She displayed a pleasing interest in his fortunes, and, being seven years younger than he, frequently gave him excellent advice.

He found her at the Mirandola, to which she had been brought by her brother, to whom also she frequently gave excellent advice, which, alas! was too seldom taken, and invited her to dance.

They slipped into a fox-trot, and Mary Walton thoughtfully asked how much money he had made that day.

"Eighteen shillings," said young Dr. Hassendean, with a dauntless air.

"It seems to go on and on and on," she said sadly.

"It does," he said.

"I've been wondering whether John could do anything," she said, frowning thoughtfully.

Young Dr. Hassendean shook his head. "The people John knows don't go to surgeries for their doctoring," he said.

"I wasn't thinking so much of patients, but of changing your luck," said Mary, gravely. "John often has very good amulets among his jade—love charms and money charms and charms that give you good health or long life. Last Christmas we gave a money charm to a girl who was rather hard-up, and she has done quite well ever since."

Young Dr. Hassendean jerked a trifle restively and not in time with the music. He knew that, as a doctor, he was a scientific man. Was this talk of charms and amulets, he asked himself, the kind of talk for a scientific man? The answer was "No." Then he remembered that Mary often gave him good advice. After all there might be something in it.

"I wish he could find one for me," he said, in a rather indulgent tone.

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"I'll talk to him about it. You come to tea on Sunday," she said.

They danced together for most of the evening, talking with enthusiasm, as the young will, of Charlie Chaplin and Hobbs, the Leviathan of cricket; and at the end of the evening she reminded him that he was to come on Sunday for the jade amulet which should mend his fortunes.

AT four o'clock on Sunday, therefore, he arrived, rather doubtful, but resolved to let Mary have her way. After tea John Walton unlocked the cabinet in which he kept small pieces of Chinese hard stone, jade, agate, crystal, and lapis lazuli.

"You've come to me at a bad time," he said thoughtfully, as he drew open the top drawer. "I have three excellent jade love charms and a very powerful agate charm against glanders. But you are not, I trust, in love and you have no horses."

"No; I haven't any horses," said young Dr. Hassendean, hastily.

"At the moment I haven't a wealth charm of any kind," said John, closing the top drawer. He opened the second and went on: "But, of course, jade is of itself a very lucky stone and any piece of it brings luck. I've a piece here which may be of some use to you."

He took from the drawer an oblong piece of milky jade about four inches long and two broad, carved into the shape of a rather cubist fish; on it were engraved eyes, a mouth, fins, spines, and a tail; the carving and engraving were rough. John Walton rubbed it almost affectionately with the palm of his hand.

"This should be useful," he said. "It was used by the priest of some very poor little Shintoist temple as a gong to summon up spirits, probably devils. Ju-ju doesn't soak into jade, you know, so you needn't worry about that. Certainly I haven't come to any extra grief since it has been in the house. It should turn out to be quite powerful."

He spoke with a conviction that impressed young Dr. Hassendean, who took the fish with an almost reverent air, put it in his waistcoat pocket, and thanked him warmly.

"Of course I can only lend it to you, for it is of the Yuan period, an uncommonly rare piece and evidently the source of the cubist inspiration in modern art," said John Walton.

"Of course," said young Dr. Hassendean, gravely. "How shall I use it?"

John hesitated; then he said: "It wouldn't be a bad thing to nail it on your front door above the knocker. It is pierced with two holes for the cord by which it was suspended from the top of its frame. Drive the longest steel pins through them that they'll take, so that it can't be easily stolen. What you want is patients, and patients are outside your flat. On your door it will catch their eye as they pass, and at any rate, if it doesn't actually bring you luck, act as a bit of an advertisement. If the Medical Council interfere, that will be between them and their consciences."

When, later, he had gone, Mary asked her brother if the fish would really work.

John's face became the face of the accomplished poker-player he was, and he said: "It ought to. Why not? He believes quite a lot that it will."

DR. HASSENDEAN went home uncommonly pleased with his mascot. The next morning he was still pleased with it and hopeful, and as soon as he had finished his breakfast he went to an ironmonger's and bought the largest steel pins that the holes in the fish would take, came back, and nailed it to his door.

He stepped on to the pavement, drew the door to, and observed the result. He was a little surprised; the fish was not large; it was not bright; but it was so incongruous with its surroundings that it caught the eye as a larger, brighter object might not have done. It even caught the eye from the other side of the street. Passers-by stopped to look at it more closely. He went up to the surgery to await the stream of patients it should set pouring in.

No stream poured in; but the usual trickle was undoubtedly not so thin. At four o'clock in the afternoon his fees, for consultations and medicine, amounted to eighteen shillings. With the evening hours to come, it looked likely to be a thirty-shilling day.

He made himself tea, and as he sat at his sitting-room window drinking it, he watched the seedy passers-by. A large Bentley limousine came slowly down the street. As it passed the face of an old man, wrinkled and cadaverous, was framed in the window. He appeared to be staring at the jade fish. The car went on down the street. In about four minutes it came slowly back, drew up to the kerb, and stopped before his door.

Young Dr. Hassendean could not think that it brought a patient; but he could hear rather jerky feet mounting the stairs, and there came a knock at the waiting-room door. He rather hurried to it and opened it, to be confronted by the cadaverous old gentleman who had stared from the car. On the instant Dr. Hassendean perceived that here was a patient who needed treatment; but he could not for the life of him diagnose his complaint.

"You Dr. Hassendean?" said the old

gentleman, brusquely pushing past him and walking shakily into the surgery.

"Yes," said young Dr. Hassendean in rather astonished accents, and followed him.

The old gentleman stared at him. He seemed to consider young Dr. Hassendean, with his round, pink, boyish face and big, broad, thick body, not quite the kind of person he had expected to find.

Then he muttered: "Oh, well, the sign's the sign." He raised his voice and added: "I've got indigestion—*rabid* indigestion. I want some bicarbonate of soda. How much can you let me have?"

"Bicarbonate of soda?" said young Dr. Hassendean, a trifle taken aback by the simplicity of the treatment of the complaint he had failed to diagnose. "Of course I can. How much do you want?"

"Can you let me have an ounce—a whole ounce?" said the old gentleman, with considerable eagerness.

Young Dr. Hassendean grasped the situation; the perplexity cleared from his face. There was no doubt whatever about the mental condition of an old gentleman who grew so excited about two-penn'orth of bicarbonate of soda. He would humour him.

"Of course I can," he said in his kindest voice. "I'll get it for you."

He went behind the screen, which hid from the common eye the bottles of drugs and the narrow table on which he made them up, weighed out an ounce of bicarbonate of soda, giving good measure, made it up into a neat little packet, sealed the ends, came from behind the screen, and held it out.

The way in which the trembling hand of the cadaverous old gentleman snatched it from him left no doubt in his mind that a passion for bicarbonate of soda was an integral part of his affliction.

The packet disappeared into the old gentleman's left-hand breast pocket. From the right-hand breast pocket he drew an envelope.

"You'll find it right," he said, handing it to young Dr. Hassendean. Then he scowled at him horribly and snarled. "You've got that sign too large—a dam' sight too large! You'll be shut up in a week, you silly young jackass! Get a smaller!"

With these kind words he turned on his heel and bustled jerkily out of the surgery. Young Dr. Hassendean turned his attention to the envelope. It was rather thick—as if it held several folded sheets of paper. He opened it and drew out ten five-pound notes.

He stared at them and gasped; his ox-like eyes grew rounder and larger; his mouth opened a little and stayed open. Slowly he grasped what had happened; the jade fish had caught the afflicted old gentleman's eye, and instead of giving ten five-pound notes for an ounce of bicarbonate of soda to some chemist, he had given them to him. Then he sighed; of course he would have to give them back.

A moment's thought showed him that that would not be easy. He did not know the old gentleman's name or address. Oh, well, his relations would

He took from the drawer an oblong piece of milky jade, carved into the shape of a rather cubist fish. "This should be useful," he said.

learn what had become of the fifty pounds and call for it. He locked up the notes in the cash-box he had bought to keep his fees in.

RECOVERING from the confusion into which the ten five-pound notes had plunged his mind, he bethought himself of the fact that his surgery was closed till seven-thirty. He would go and tell John Walton of this odd incident. It was true that he was not likely to find that industrious man at home, for it was his habit in the afternoons to relax his mind by playing games of chance at his club. But he would probably find Mary Walton at home. She was. Over a second and richer tea, he told his story. At once she agreed with him that the incident must be ascribed to the mysterious and magical workings of the jade fish, because there was no other way of accounting for it.

" No one ever will come for those ten five-pound notes. You'll see," she said, confidently.

He lingered on, talking of their subjects ; he dwelt at length on the latest exploit of Hobbs, the Leviathan of cricket. When Mary opened the front door to let him out, John Walton was mounting the steps. He listened to the story of the cadaverous old gentleman with earnest attention and a rather puzzled air. Mary contributed the explanation that it was the work of the jade fish. John seemed to receive enlightenment suddenly. He chuckled.

He bent forward, laid a hand on young Dr. Hassendean's thick forearm, and said earnestly : " Just what I expected of that jade fish. Bank those notes at once—by post. And, if you sell any more bicarbonate of soda, bank the money at once—if you have to go down to the all-night post-office at Charing Cross to post it to your bank."

With that he shook young Dr. Hassendean warmly by the hand, bade him good night, walked briskly up the steps into the house. He liked young Dr. Hassendean, but he did not seek close intimacy with him. He left that to Mary. He was a thundering good doctor ; but outside his job, like so many other men, he was uninspiring. Simplicity, indeed, could go very little farther.

YOUNG Dr. Hassendean mounted the bus to Camden Town rather mystified ; why should John Walton have expected the jade fish to act in just that way and cause an insane old gentleman to pay him ten five-pound notes for an ounce of bicarbonate of soda ?

At dinner Mary asked her brother what he thought of the incident.

He said, somewhat cryptically : " I fancy that the explanation is that some diseases are so expensive that they rarely get treated in the public hospitals. Hassendean has had no experience of the nervous disorders of the rich."

That night young Dr. Hassendean treated eight more patients. It was a thirty-two shilling day. The jade fish was working in a small way as well as in a large.

The next day was uneventful. But the fish was still getting in good work. When, at a few minutes to ten that night, he turned the last and most querulous patient out of the surgery, he found that it had been a thirty-six-shilling day. He opened the windows wide, swept out the surgery and waiting-room, then went into his sitting-room and settled down on the divan, which would later be his comfortable bed, with a whisky-and-soda and a detective story. He was half-way down the tenth page when there came a knock at the street door.

It was an uncertain, shaky knock. He was on his feet at once ; it looked like a thirty-shilling fee. He was half-way down the stairs when there came another knock—louder, urgent, imperative. It *was* a thirty-shilling fee ! He opened the door quickly. At the threshold stood a lady.

She was not the kind of lady he expected to come to summon him. She was dark and pretty ; her face was pale ; her hair was shingled ; her dark eyes looked uncommonly large. An evening cloak, Chinese and finely embroidered, covered her frock, and on her head sparkled the diamonds in a coronet. It was *not* a thirty-shilling fee.

" Are you Dr. Hassendean ? " she said.

" Yes," he said, staring at her.

In the same brusque and jerky fashion as the cadaverous old gentleman, she pushed past him and went up the stairs straight into his sitting-room. He shut the front door and followed her. In the sitting-room she turned to face him, fumbling the honey-coloured jade buckle of her cloak with small, dirty fingers, on which were five rings set with large sapphires.

On the instant Dr. Hassendean perceived that here was a patient who needed treatment ; but he could not for the life of him diagnose her complaint.

" I've got indigestion—*rabid* indigestion. I want some bicarbonate of soda. How much can you let me have ? " she said quickly, in rather shrill and importunate accents.

Young Dr. Hassendean again stared at her. Indeed, he almost glared. He said, faintly : " Bicarbonate of soda ? "

" Yes. I know. I saw the fish this morning. I tell you I've got *rabid* indigestion. How much can you let me have ? Can you let me have an ounce ? " she said

"How much can you let me have? Can you let me have an ounce?" she said with clamorous eagerness.

with the same almost clamorous eagerness, twisting her fingers in a fold of her cloak.

"Hysterical," he thought, and said aloud: "Yes; I can let you have an ounce. I'll get it."

He went into the surgery quickly. He wished to be alone with his thoughts. What on earth did it mean—these rich people with rabid indigestion coming to him for bicarbonate of soda? He had evidently been wrong in believing the cadaverous old gentleman to be mad. Or was this lady also mad? He heard her moving in the sitting-room. It seemed improbable that two persons so unlike should suffer from the same delusion. He could not make up his mind about it. He sealed the packet of bicarbonate of soda, brought it into the sitting-room, held it out to her.

Even as the cadaverous old gentleman had done, she fairly snatched it from his fingers, and said in a tone of immense relief: "Thank you—good night—the tobacco jar."

She went through the door; her high heels clattered on the uncarpeted stairs as she ran down them; the street door banged. Young Dr. Hassendean hurried to the surgery window and put his head out. He watched her hurry along towards Regent's Park. Fifty yards up the street she stepped into a large car. It carried her away.

He scratched his head; she was indeed a sudden lady. Then he walked into his sitting-room and opened his tobacco jar. He had more than an inkling of what he would find in it; he knew. He found them; ten five-pound notes.

He gazed at them with troubled eyes. It was all very well, but with the pleasure they gave him was mingled a certain compunction. Fifty pounds was fifty pounds; but was it quite fair to have a jade fish which compelled absolute strangers to buy bicarbonate of soda from him for fifty pounds an ounce? Was it cricket?

He broke from these speculations to follow Mr. Walton's curious advice. He went down to Charing Cross post-office, registered and insured the ten five-pound notes, and posted them to his bank.

The next morning he felt easier in mind about having a jade fish, the mere sight of which compelled wealthy strangers to buy bicarbonate of soda from him at an extravagant price; but he was now a little troubled by the difficulty of adjusting modern science to this odd fact. Modern science would also, he thought, need adjusting to the less important fact that since he had had that sign on his door his patients had doubled in number and were still increasing. That night he found that he had had a forty-four-shilling day.

THE next day, at intervals, five motor-cars stopped at his door. From them four men and one woman went up the stairs to the waiting-room and passed into the surgery. Two of them were young men of a type unpleasing to the robust young doctor; they were effeminate, yellowish, admirably dressed, with ties, socks, and handkerchiefs that matched; they were jerky, supercilious, and affected. They also were suffering from the complaint he could not diagnose; they also asserted that it was rabid indigestion, and asked for bicarbonate of soda. He gave them an ounce apiece. Both of them handed ten five-pound notes to him. He took them with a warm satisfaction. These were the kind of people on whom the fish should work.

The third man was about fifty years old, with an uncommonly able face, rather spoilt by the weakness of the mouth and chin. Young Dr. Hassendean knew that he ought to recognize him, that he had seen his portrait in the illustrated weeklies, a well-known actor, or politician, or K.C. The lady was about the same age, and had plainly been a beauty. She looked to be ravaged by discontent. Like those of the lady who wore the coronet, her hands needed to be manicured. All these four came before three o'clock in the afternoon, and young Dr. Hassendean paid two hundred pounds into his account just before the bank closed.

He had not been back at the surgery ten minutes before the fifth man came. He was plainly a war wreck; his left arm was twisted, his left leg crippled, his lined face incredibly haggard from long endurance of pain. He said that he was suffering from rabid indigestion and wanted bicarbonate of soda.

But here young Dr. Hassendean drew the line. He had made no bones about humouring the other six patients to the tune of fifty pounds apiece—but not this war wreck. He would save him from the compelling influence of the jade fish.

He said, firmly: "But it's all nonsense, sir. Why do you come to me for bicarbonate of soda when you can get all you want from any chemist for tuppence an ounce?"

The war wreck seemed considerably taken aback. His sunken eyes stared at the doctor in manifest amazement. He stammered: "B-b-but it isn't the same t-t-thing!"

"It's exactly the same thing and the same quality," protested young Dr. Hassendean. "I don't know why all you people should be suffering from this delusion. At least I do know why, but I can't understand how it works." He paused; a happy thought came to him; he added: "I tell

you what : I'll give you half a pound of it—just to show you."

The shattered man's eyes opened wider. " Do you mean to tell me that what you sold Sir George—that what an old gentleman showed me at my club on Monday afternoon was really bicarbonate of soda ? " he said in a hushed voice.

" It certainly was. That was what he asked for," said young Dr. Hassendean, coldly.

The shattered man's eyes grew a trifle less incredulous ; then he cried : " But what about the fish ? "

" Well, I can't help the fish I nailed it on my door for luck. If it gives people these delusions, all I can say is they must be mad already," said young Dr. Hassendean, with an even colder dignity.

" He's speaking the truth—he's really speaking the truth," said the shattered man ; and his voice was again hushed. He paused, then said : " Well, it doesn't matter. I've plenty to go on with." Then he broke into a harsh cackle of laughter as he turned to leave the room, and on the threshold he murmured : " Oh, what a sell for old Georgey-porgy ! What a sell ! "

He cackled harshly half-way down the stairs.

Young Dr. Hassendean looked out of the window and watched him hobble across the pavement into his car.

The shattered man looked up and saw him, waved his right hand, and cried : " Good-bye, baby bumpkin ! Good-bye ! "

Young Dr. Hassendean, deeply offended, drew in his head. It was quite clear to him that adversity had not improved the manners of the shattered man. It was also quite clear to him that these people were mad, or on the borderland : the shattered man had been incomprehensible. He felt uncomfortable ; the business was confusing. But he realized that a man fresh from walking the hospitals could not expect to make two hundred pounds in a day with any real comfort. That was the prerogative of the heads of the profession.

During the next two days the effect on Park Street of five motor-cars standing before his door in one day became manifest. Very few of the adult inhabitants of Park Street are happy without a bottle of medicine ; most of them were on the panel. But it was plain that a doctor whose patients came to him in large motor-cars must sell a much superior bottle of medicine to that sold by their doctors in other parts of Camden Town. At any rate, it was well worth two shillings to test it.

The next day was an eighty-eight-shilling day. On the morning after twenty-seven inhabitants of Park Street, having already taken two doses of young Dr. Hassendean's medicine, felt better than they had felt for years. The good news spread ; his surgery became the most fashionable surgery north of Mornington Crescent. The fish was indeed getting in its work.

THEN his eyes were opened to the true character of that fish in a very startling fashion. He had danced at the Mirandola with Mary Walton, had brought her home, and a few yards from her door had caught the last bus to Camden Town. A man had followed him up the steps to the top of the bus and, though two seats were empty, sat down beside him. He was wearing a bowler hat, and, since he was much shorter, the doctor, looking down, could not see his face for its brim.

Then he perceived that he had an odd musky smell. Many of his patients had a musky smell, but this was a different muskiness. Then he saw his hands, resting on his knees, in the moonlight. They were small, yellow hands, and the nail of the right little finger was uncommonly long.

Then, looking straight ahead of him and scarcely moving his lips, the man said in a whisper, nicely pitched to reach Dr. Hassendean's ear : " You vantee more dope ? Not ? You come my housee ; me sellee velly good dope."

" What the devil are you talking about ? " snarled young Dr. Hassendean, in an immense and shocked surprise.

The Chinaman's quiet chuckle conveyed a complete disbelief in that surprise ; he said in the same whisper : " Me see cars. Me know fish. Allee same saloon sign—snow not vhiskee. Velly bad fish—too big—see um too muchee. Fly-cops know fish on door. Take um away to-night."

Slowly enlightenment came to young Dr. Hassendean. So that was the kind of mascot the fish was. That was the sign on his door : " Cocaine Sold Here ! " That was the disease that had baffled his diagnosis ; dope-fiends ! Here was a pretty kettle of fish ! Nice for a young practitioner ! Oh, very nice !

The whisper came again : " You vantee more snow. Come my housee—Pennyfields. Here."

The hand moved so quickly that young Dr. Hassendean did not see it move. He felt it brush his hand ; he felt the scrap of paper in his palm.

Again the whisper came : " No lookee now. Knockee door allee same this."

The hand rested on young Dr. Hassendean's knee ; a finger tapped out three light double knocks and a heavy single knock. It repeated the taps to get the knock clearly into young Dr. Hassendean's head.

" Got um ? " came the whisper. " Comee soon—velly good stock."

The bus was drawing to the kerb at Chalk Farm Station. It stopped. The Chinaman rose, went down the steps with smooth swiftness, and slipped into the station. Young Dr. Hassendean hesitated. Then he put the tiny slip of paper into his waistcoat pocket, bundled himself heavily off the bus, and hurried back up the hill. A light was still burning in John Walton's study ; John himself opened the front door.

" Hullo ! " he said at the sight of young Dr. Hassendean's startled face. " Have the police got on to it already ? "

His voice was cheerful and so was his face.

" The police haven't got on to it yet ; but *I* have ! " said young Dr. Hassendean, with some vehemence. " I came to ask you what I'd better do about it."

JOHN led the way into his study, mixed his guest a whisky-and-soda, and listened to his story of the Chinaman on the bus. Then he said cheerfully : " Yes. That was bound to happen. But the odd thing is that, though I know a good deal about China, I never knew till you told me what the old gentleman, who gave you fifty pounds for an ounce of bicarbonate of soda, said about the jade fish I lent you, that the fish is the sign which the itinerant dope-sellers in China chalk on their door. I've been making inquiries about it. The regular dope-sellers don't use it. But when one of these other fellows gets a stock of dope, he goes to a town, hires a small house, chalks the sign on the door, and sells his stock. Of course, he never uses anything so blatant as a jade fish. He just chalks on the door the fish symbol, or a line that suggests a fish's back—spiny, you know—or just a fin, or a fish's tail ; and he chalks it faint and small. When the word has gone round that he has dope to sell, he rubs it out. Sometimes a policeman sees it before it is rubbed out. Then he is blackmailed."

" But how on earth did these English dope-fiends learn about it ? " said young Dr. Hassendean.

" That is what is called the freemasonry of vice," said John, cheerfully. " The fish is by now the sign of the dope-house all the world over."

" You don't suppose that the police know what that fish means ? " said young Dr. Hassendean, in a scared voice.

" Your Chinaman said that they did—fly-cops are detectives," said John Walton, with unabated cheerfulness.

" Confound it ! The sooner I get that fish off the door the better ! " cried young Dr. Hassendean, in a thoroughly scared voice.

" It might be as well," said John carelessly. " I'll come along with you. Have you got any tools ? "

" Oh, I can prise it up with my knife."

" Oh, no ! I don't want that fish chipping," said John, quickly and firmly. " I'll find a small pair of pincers and take it off myself."

He found a small pair of pincers ; and they set out. They walked up the Primrose Hill Road and came into Park Street from the Regent's Park end. When they were rather more than thirty yards from the surgery, a loud knock rang out on the air, and they saw three men at the street door ; they were big men.

" The police already, by Jove ! " said John, softly, and stopped short.

He hesitated a few seconds, then gripped young Dr. Hassendean's arm and led him across the road.

" It's no use turning tail. They may have noticed us," he said, and walked quietly along the opposite pavement.

As they came opposite the surgery a louder and more imperative knocking rang out. Young Dr. Hassendean's heart sank like lead ; that knocking was the knell of his career.

John Walton did not quicken his steps. They came to the cab-rank at the end of the street ; John opened the door of the nearest taxi and said to the driver : " Scotland Yard."

As the taxi started he breathed a sigh of relief and said : " The thing you've got to do is to put yourself right with the police without any police-court proceedings. I think myself that they'll be so delighted to have that address in Pennyfields and the knock that opens the door that they'll think the fish a godsend. You'd better let me do the talking."

Young Dr. Hassendean was still scared stiff by the sight of those three big men sounding the knell of his career on his front door. He was only too ready to let anyone who would prevent police-court proceedings do the talking. He said so, with unaffected sincerity.

AT the Yard John said that they had brought important information, and sent his card to the Chief Inspector on duty. They were taken to him.

When John said that his companion was Dr. Hassendean of Camden Town, the Inspector said, sharply : " Oh, is he ? " and stared at him with a hostile air.

But as John unfolded the story of the jade fish, how it came to be nailed on the door, and how it brought curious people to the surgery, and how their strange behaviour had puzzled young Dr. Hassendean, the Inspector's air

When John said his companion was Dr. Hassendean of Camden Town, the Inspector said, sharply: "Oh, is he?" and stared at him with a hostile air.

of hostility became slowly an air of indulgence almost pitying. But when John came to the incident of the Chinaman on the bus and his offer, the Inspector became all keen alertness. He read the address, then smelt the scrap of paper. He said that it was quite all right. He made young Dr. Hassendean repeat the Chinaman's knock three times.

Then he said: "That'll be all right, gentlemen. As a matter of fact, doctor, I was trying to get into touch with you this very night. I'll call my men off."

"And I'll go and get that infernal fish off my door at once!" cried young Dr. Hassendean, with immense heat and ingratitude.

"Nonsense! Nonsense! You leave it where it is!" said the Inspector. "You'll get some more of these Chinese dope-sellers; and we can do with every one you hand over to us!"

Young Dr. Hassendean came away greatly relieved; there would be no police-court proceedings; his career was unharmed.

A LESS rare and curious jade fish adorns his door to-day. But it very rarely attracts a patient in a car. Those who know its significance know also that his bicarbonate of soda, excellent as it is, is no real substitute for cocaine. This, again, is the freemasonry of vice. But the trickle of genuine patients has become a broad and deep and steady stream. They are assured that he gives them the best bottle of medicine north of the Thames. It cures them by the score. On that stream young Dr. Hassendean has floated into matrimony; but John Walton does not often visit his brother-in-law.

THE CLEVEREST MURDER—IN FACT OR FICTION?

A SYMPOSIUM OF EMINENT WRITERS

PART II.

"If blood was spilt upon this floor," said Macé, "it would run even as this water will run."

THE CLUE OF THE RUNNING WATER.

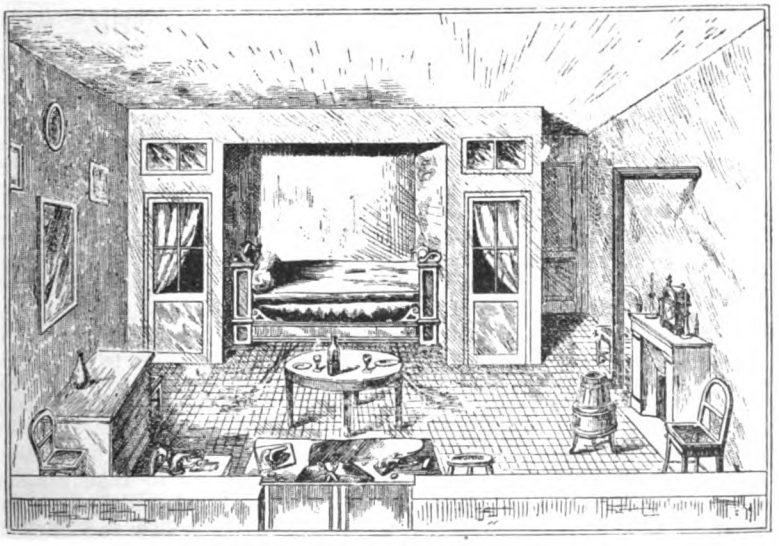
By
F. BRITTEN AUSTIN.

IF not perhaps the cleverest murder ever committed, few certainly have been carried out with more audacity and cunning than the mysterious affair which excited all Paris at the beginning of 1869. And few criminal cases present such a Sherlock-Holmes-like romance of detective skill. In the first days of January, 1869, Paris was horrified at the discovery of numerous small fragments of human flesh, of which the most important was attached to a thigh-bone, at various places in the Seine and the Canal St. Martin. The only clue possessed by the police was the evidence of a washing-boat proprietor, who stated that at eleven p.m. on December 19th he had seen a man in a silk hat who threw lumps of meat into the river, and, being asked what he was doing, had replied that he was an angler and was throwing ground-bait for the morrow. On January 26th, however, an eating-house keeper in the Rue Princesse discovered, neatly sewn up in black calico, a human leg floating in his well. The police being informed, a young and newly-appointed Commissary, M. Macé, went himself to the house in the Rue Princesse, and in the well found a second leg, also neatly sewn up in black calico. Both legs were clad in long stockings, and on one of the stockings was the mark + B +. Two

doctors were called in and stated that the legs were feminine and had been in the water about a month. How did they get there? The well was in an interior court, and to reach it strangers had to ring the bell for the concierge, but the initiated could press a knob which released a secret spring and opened the outer gate. Nobody in the house was missing, nobody in the house was of suspect character. Two policemen then remembered that, being on special duty in the neighbourhood of the Rue Princesse on the night of December 21st-22nd, between one and two a.m. they had stopped a man carrying two parcels who had stated that he was himself in the secret political police, that he had come off a much-delayed train, and that his parcels contained each a ham, which he invited them to feel. On January 26th there remained, of course, no clue to this man. The two legs were taken to the Morgue and added to the other mysterious fragments. The absence of the head rendered direct identification of this undoubtedly murdered individual impossible. M. Macé set himself to trace whatever women whose names began with B should be missing. His search narrowed itself down to the runaway wife of a cheesemonger named Bécroix. He was taken to the Morgue, and positively identified the remains as those of his faithless spouse. And then the Government medical specialist declared that the legs were most certainly those of an elderly man!

Macé had to begin again. No man whose name began with B was reported missing; his only clue was his recognition that the two black calico parcels were sewn up as journeymen tailors sew up their work. He interrogated the concierge of the house in the Rue Princesse, learned that she had had a girl-tenant who formerly made waistcoats for a tailor, and who had left on January 7th to become a singer in the *cafés*. He sent for this girl, who stated that the tailor for whom she worked was a M. Voirbo. She had last seen him two months previously in a *café* together with an old man friend of his whose name she did not know and an old woman, aunt of this latter, whom she knew only under the sobriquet of "Mère Bandage." "Mère Bandage" was traced and sent for, and proved to be a Mme. Bodasse. Did she by chance recognize the mark + B + on the stockings? Yes. The stockings were those of her nephew, Desiré Bodasse, a man older than herself, whom she had last seen on December 13th in company with M. Voirbo. There was nothing extraordinary in the fact that she had not seen him for a month. Often he was absent for a long period; he was a curious old man of dissipated life who lived on his small means. He lived at 59, Rue Dauphine.

Mme. Bodasse thereupon accompanied Macé to the Rue Dauphine. The concierge stated that she rarely saw M. Bodasse, who slipped in and out without speaking to her, but that she thought she had seen him yesterday in the street, and that certainly he had been in his room on the previous night, for from the courtyard she had seen a light in his room and a shadow on the blind. Mme. Bodasse then said she must have been mistaken in her identification; obviously Desiré Bodasse could not have



The room in which the crime was committed.

(From a contemporary drawing.)

been murdered a month previously since last night he had been in his room.

Macé nevertheless decided to see the tailor, Voirbo. He went to the address given by the *café*-singer, and found that he had moved, having recently been married. He also visited Voirbo's former charwoman. She stated that her employer was a great speaker at Socialist meetings, lived a very loose life, spent much money, and had no debts. Did she know Desiré Bodasse? Certainly. He and M. Voirbo were the greatest of friends. She had been surprised not to see him at Voirbo's marriage on January 7th. Voirbo had stated that the old man had irritatingly gone on a journey just when he wanted him to be best man at the wedding.

THE next day Mme. Bodasse, accompanied by the concierge of 59, Rue Dauphine, called upon Macé. The more she thought of it the more she was certain that she had been right in her identification. The concierge must be mistaken when she said she had seen a light in his room. The concierge, however, asserted most positively that she had seen a light, and added that quite possibly Bodasse had been in his room when Macé had knocked at the door on the previous day. It would be quite like him to refuse to open. She admitted that it might be possible for someone to slip in at night without being seen, difficult but possible. She could not be sure that it was really he she had seen in the street.

Macé went again to Bodasse's lodging and broke open the door. The room was empty and thick with dust, but in perfect order. A twenty-four-hour cuckoo clock was ticking. Fifteen burnt matches and two that had failed to strike lay on the floor. Two packets that had contained candles, of which only one remained unused, were on the table. Those packets had originally contained sixteen candles—plainly fifteen had been burned, and the fifteen matches had lit them. There were two candlesticks thick with melted grease, placed in such a way that they threw a full light on the window. Macé calculated that each candle would burn three hours, and then the concierge stated that she and her other tenants had seen, at intervals during the past six weeks, a light in the room from eight p.m. to eleven p.m., which had made them think Bodasse was at home. Strangest of all, on a peg hung Bodasse's clothes and what both identified certainly as the only hat he possessed—all thick with dust. In a corner was his swordstick—an article both women described as inseparable from him.

In a drawer were two pairs of stockings, like those found upon the dismembered legs, and marked + B +. Over the bed hung an old turnip-watch, stopped. Macé opened its case, and within it was a scrap of paper giving the numbers of some Italian Government bonds to bearer. Mme. Bodasse then stated that if her nephew possessed any securities, they would certainly be in the secret drawer of his desk, similar to one she herself owned. The drawer was opened. It was empty. Something had certainly happened to Desiré Bodasse, and certainly, on fifteen occasions, someone had been in his room, lit a candle, and wound up the clock. Perhaps this mysterious individual would return? Two policemen were left to hide themselves in the cupboards, with instructions on no account to be together out of the room and to arrest anyone who entered.

Pursuing his researches, Macé then discovered that Bodasse had been seen by no one since December 14th, and that he had been with Voirbo from four-forty-five p.m. onwards on that day. He discovered also that Voirbo had paid the rent of his former lodging with an Italian bearer-bond which, being traced, proved to be one of those whose numbers were in the case of Bodasse's watch. Moreover, his charwoman now remembered that upon arriving at Voirbo's rooms at eight a.m. on December 17th, she had found him most unwontedly up and dressed, all the housework done, the floor fresh scrubbed, an intense smell of paraffin in the room, and the stove red-hot with an immense fire. He had given her a plausible explanation for all this abnormality, and except at his wedding she had not since seen him.

MEANWHILE, no one came again to the room of the missing Bodasse—not surprising, for Macé found that his two policemen, disobedient to their orders, had rather advertised than concealed their presence. What was surprising was the chance discovery that M. Voirbo, upon whom such suspicion now rested, was himself a spy in the employ of the political police, and that he had not only been talking with one of Macé's policemen, but had taken him away to drink in a *café*. Macé thereupon dismissed his useless watchdogs, shut up the room, and wrote a polite note to Voirbo inviting him to call upon him at one p.m. two days hence to give him any information he could relative to the disappearance of Desiré Bodasse.

Punctual to the minute, Voirbo appeared. Feigning to take him into his confidence, Macé referred to his connection with the secret police and invited him to give his

assistance in this mysterious matter. Voirbo answered effusively, but with perfect self-command, that he was eager to avenge the evident murder of his old friend; he would do all he could. He came back next day, without being asked to do so, and stated that assuredly before the week was out the murderer would be discovered—he could vouch for it.

AND then a curious thing happened. Before the week was out, a tripe-dresser of drunken habits, by name Rifer, who lived in the house in the Rue Princesse where the legs were found, went into delirium tremens, threw his furniture out of the window, and screamed that he had himself murdered Bodasse, cut him up, and distributed the fragments. He demanded to be taken at once to the guillotine, as the dead man haunted him. He was taken instead to hospital, where he died next day. Voirbo's prediction was startlingly verified—only, unfortunately, Macé happened to know that all the week Voirbo had been heavily plying the wretched drunkard with drink.

Next morning, at eight o'clock, before any of his staff had arrived, Voirbo presented himself at Macé's office to express his pleasure that the murderer had discovered himself. Macé kept him in pleasant conversation for an hour, until his men should be on the spot, and then—to Voirbo's intense astonishment and indignation—arrested him.

Subjected though he was to the severe interrogatory of the French police, Voirbo nevertheless boldly denied everything. Upon him was found a steamer-ticket for New York, in the name of a man living at Aubervilliers—a spot where two untraced murders had recently been committed—according to Voirbo, a friend of his. Macé went to the new lodgings of Voirbo and found, in a soldered case immersed in a barrel of wine, all the missing Italian bonds belonging to Bodasse; but still Voirbo obstinately and indignantly denied the crime. Macé then took him to his former lodgings, now newly occupied. It was a room with a tiled floor that sloped. Now, of course, it had been many times scrubbed since Voirbo had occupied it. Macé categorically accused Voirbo of having murdered and dismembered Desiré Bodasse in that room on the night of December 14th. Voirbo flatly denied it. "Very good," said Macé. "If blood was spilt upon this sloping floor it would run even as this water will run," with which he emptied a water-bottle upon the floor. The water ran and collected in a pool where Voirbo's bed had formerly stood. Macé immediately had the tiles taken up—their under surface was thick with dried blood! Before this dramatic proof Voirbo broke down and confessed everything.

He did not, however, go to the guillotine. Not in vain had he boasted of his connection with the secret police. Mysteriously, a razor was smuggled into his prison, and he cut his throat—much to M. Macé's righteous anger, for that Sherlock Holmes in real life had just then discovered that certainly Voirbo had also committed the two untraced murders at Aubervilliers, and that he was likewise one of the chiefs of a mysterious gang of international burglars for whom the two policemen had been watching when they had met the man with the "hams." He had murdered Desiré Bodasse because the old man had refused to lend him ten thousand francs Voirbo needed for his —bigamous—marriage to a quite virtuous young girl, who was utterly ignorant of his character and with whose total property he was just then proposing to abscond to America. Other crimes would certainly have been brought home to him, had not his opportune death put an end to further investigations that might have been extremely inconvenient to the secret police department of Napoleon III.

SO terminated the career of one of the most formidable criminals who ever lived —unmasked in a crime he must have felt certain would escape detection. Who could put together these scraps of flesh of which, excepting the two legs in the well, none weighed more than two pounds? Had he not run molten lead into the head and flung it into the deepest part of the Seine? Who would suspect the disappearance of this scarcely-known and often absent old man, to whose room he had taken back his stick and his only hat?—in whose room he had, on fifteen occasions over a period of six weeks, sat with the lighted candle that indicated his victim's presence, wound up the cuckoo-clock the other tenants were accustomed to hear? And if inquiry began to be made, was he not himself in the secret police and thus certain to hear of it? Could he not dare to beard this young and surely inexperienced Police Commissary and put him on a false track? Had he not indeed, as he promised, *produced the murderer?* Was he not absolutely sure of immunity? Had it not been for M. Macé, whose first case this was in a long and distinguished career, he would undoubtedly have achieved it.

Just before the time at which a train was due to pass, the body was dragged down to the railway.

FOILED BY A HAT.

By R. AUSTIN FREEMAN,

Author of "John Thorndyke's Cases," etc.

SINCE the mere killing of a human being usually presents little difficulty and demands but little ingenuity, the cleverness of a murder must be judged by the efficiency of the measures taken by the murderer to conceal his connection with the death. Of such measures, the most effective are those which conceal the fact of the murder; which produce the appearances of death from natural causes. For thereby are avoided, not only the almost insuperable difficulties of disposing of the body, but also the incalculable possibilities of an inquest in a case of murder.

It is difficult to judge how far in real life these conditions of safety have been fulfilled. The murders which are recorded are the murders which have been recognized as such, and in most of them the criminals have been discovered. But murders, like other human achievements, cannot be fairly estimated in terms of their failures. A perfectly successful murder would pass unrecognized and unrecorded; and when we recall the numerous cases, characterized by the crudest and stupidest methods, which have only, at long last, been brought to light through idiotic repetitions, we cannot avoid an uncomfortable suspicion that many an innocent-looking grave guards the secret of an unrecorded murder.

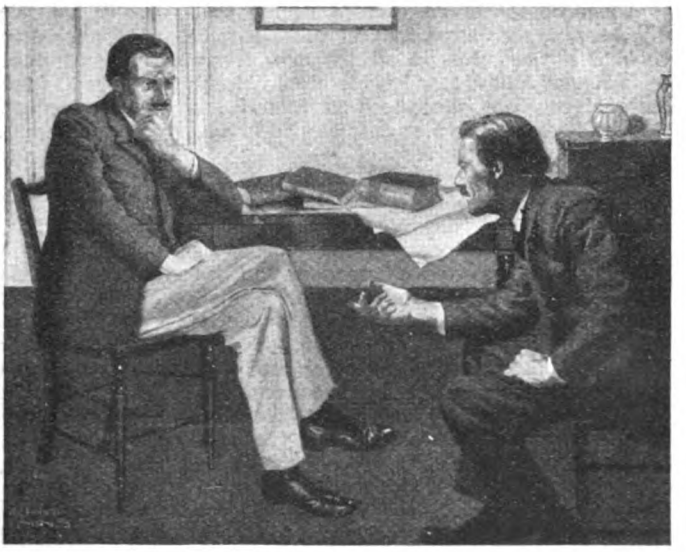
Of the murders actually recorded, few would satisfy the most modest demands of the detective story-writer, who must needs invent his own crimes owing to the incapacity of the real criminal. The sensational murder trial, which thrills the newspaper public, would read but flatly if translated into fiction. The methods even of famous murderers are commonly crude and even foolish, and the gross and palpable traces that they leave can be followed by the most obvious and commonplace means. Indeed, in the whole of my reading—with some experience as a prison medical officer—I have met with but a single case which seemed to be worth using for fiction; the one upon which was founded my story of "The Case of Oscar Brodski." And even this case was selected less for its ingenuity of plan than for the excellent opening that it offered for medico-legal investigation. The following is a summary of the case, "Reg. *v.* Watson and Wife" (Notts Lent Assizes, 1867).

The prisoners, who inhabited a cottage abutting on a railway line, planned to

murder a man named Raynor and to conceal the crime by means of a fictitious railway accident. Accordingly, the victim was enticed to the cottage and there murdered by manual strangulation—throttling. Then, just before the time at which a train was due to pass the house, the body was dragged down to the railway, lifted over a gate, and laid across the rails.

So much for the plan; and, simple as it was, if it had been completely carried out it would almost certainly have succeeded. All of the traces of the murder—the finger-marks on the throat and the condition of the heart, lungs, and brain—would have been obliterated by the mutilation that the train would have produced in passing over the body.

What actually happened was what usually does happen. The murderers had sketched out the crime, but had not filled in the details. They had "gone nap" on the one chance and had made no provision against its failure; and in their haste they had forgotten, until too late, to place the victim's hat on the line. But the main chance failed. The expected train was late, and in the interval the body was seen by a porter and removed. Then, of course, the murder was out; and a smear of blood on the top bar of the gate, marks of dragging and recognizable foot-prints in the soft clay, connected the body with the cottage. There, bloodstains and other traces of the crime were discovered, including the charred remains of the missing hat. And thus the Providence which watches over murderers—with no benevolent eye—intervened once more to play upon the murderer's calculations the trump card of the incalculable.



During the three days which the brothers spent together in an obscure hotel, the murder was planned in all its details.

THE MURDER OF WILLIAM BERNAYS.

By

SIR JOHN HALL,

Author of "Four Famous Mysteries," etc.

THERE are few murder trials which do not reveal an extraordinary fatuity and lack of foresight on the part of the persons convicted of this particular crime. The case of Armand Peltzer is an exception to the rule. It is the story of a murder conceived by an intelligent and well-educated man who took, as he thought, every precaution to avoid detection. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that it supplied Paul Bourget with the plot of "André Cornélis," one of the best-known of his novels.

It was a bad day for William Bernays, the Antwerp lawyer, when, in 1876, he introduced the young engineer, Armand Peltzer, into his home. Professionally, Bernays was a successful man, but his domestic life had not been happy. Almost from the day of his marriage he and his

handsome wife failed to agree, and before long their disunion was so complete that the question of a divorce by mutual consent was seriously discussed. This solution of their difficulties was, however, abandoned, chiefly because of certain arrangements about their child, to which Mme. Bernays would not agree. Meanwhile, all through their discussions Armand Peltzer had been "the inseparable companion of the husband and the confidant of the wife." Then, suddenly, William Bernays grew suspicious and closed his door upon his former friend. His action was justified. For a long time past Armand Peltzer had been the devoted admirer, perhaps the favoured lover, of Mme. Bernays, and his thoughts at once turned to murder when he realized that Bernays' decision to exclude him from the house was irrevocable.

LÉON PELTZER, a younger brother of Armand, was a ne'er-do-weel who, after leading for seven years a roving and disreputable existence, had, in 1881, drifted to New York. But on receipt of a letter from Armand he threw up his employment and, giving out that he was bound for Canada, travelled, under an assumed name, to Paris by way of Liverpool.

On November 17th, 1881, the brothers met at an obscure hotel by the Gare de Lyon, and here, during the three days which they spent together, the murder of William Bernays was planned in all its details. Armand, it was arranged, was to return to Belgium, where Léon was presently to appear in the character of "Henry Vaughan," the agent of "Murray and Co., of Sydney," a firm proposing to start a line of steamers between Hamburg and Australia. In this capacity he was to seek the professional advice of Bernays, who was to be entrapped and killed in some house in Brussels, which was to be hired for the purpose. Léon carried out his instructions to the letter. Having disguised himself so effectually that even the barber who had sold him a wig and a false beard failed to recognize him when he entered his shop a second time, he left Paris on December 1st, and spent the next three weeks in travelling in Belgium, Holland, and Germany. In the various towns which he visited he stayed at the best hotels and sought interviews with the principal lawyers and discussed with them the business upon which he was supposed to be engaged. On December 22nd he arrived in Brussels, and by the immediate payment of six months' rent obtained possession of an apartment in the Rue de la Loi, which he fitted up as an office. Everything being thus prepared, he opened up communications with William Bernays, who agreed to call upon "Mr. Vaughan" in Brussels on January 7th, 1882. Any reluctance which he may have felt to making an appointment with his unknown correspondent was overcome by the receipt of a cheque for his fee in advance.

ALTHOUGH they notified the police of his disappearance, Bernays' friends and relations do not appear to have thought that he had come to serious harm. But it was one part of Armand's plan to allow the murder to be discovered in course of time. Before he could marry Mme. Bernays, her husband's decease must be legally established, and his impatience brooked no delay. On January 19th, 1882, the King's Procurator opened a letter from Basle, signed "Henry Vaughan," and addressed to the Coroner of Brussels, in which the writer stated that he had accidentally shot M. Bernays during a business interview at No. 159, Rue de la Loi. Finding himself friendless in a foreign town, he had, after this terrible mishap, lost his head and fled. The police at once went to the address indicated and found the body.

The medical evidence and the general circumstances suggested that he had been the victim not of an accident, but of foul play. Traces of the recent presence of "Henry Vaughan" at Hamburg, Bremen, and other places were speedily discovered, but since his arrival in Brussels he seemed to have vanished from the face of the earth. The acute investigating magistrate, however, had observed that Bernays had been paid in advance for his consultation, a circumstance which seemed to denote a certain familiarity with one of his peculiarities—his greediness for his fees. If that were so, then "Henry Vaughan" must clearly be looked for among the unfortunate man's friends and business acquaintances. Photographs of the letter to the Coroner and of other documents found at the Rue de la Loi were taken and disseminated freely. By a most fortunate chance a tradesman at Verviers recognized Léon's handwriting and informed the police. Armand, however, was able to prove that on the day of the murder he had not left Antwerp, while as regards his brother, he produced a long letter dated from San Francisco, which he professed to have only just received. But the police were not to be deterred from following up a clue which they were now convinced was the right one. On March 5th Armand was taken into custody, and two days later Léon was secured at Cologne. At their subsequent trial the identity of Léon and "Henry Vaughan" was proved conclusively, while the originals of various telegrams which had

passed between the brothers established beyond a doubt Armand's complicity in the murder. Both were convicted and condemned to death, but, as is usual in Belgium, their sentence was commuted into penal servitude for life.

"The murder of M. Bernays," commented *The Times* in a leading article on December 23rd, 1882, "could only have been committed by men having plenty of time and money and the experience which comes of education and great knowledge of the world." Whether that be so or not, it certainly deserves to be remembered as a highly ingenious crime, the authors of which would probably have remained undetected had not a tradesman, with whom he had dealings eight years before, recognized Léon's handwriting. That possibility should have been foreseen, but owing to his long absence from Belgium the risk was probably considered negligible.

The magistrate's body was found in a ditch transfixed with his own sword.

THE CASE OF SIR EDMUND GODFREY.

By **G. K. CHESTERTON,**

Author of "The Innocence of Father Brown," etc.

I SUPPOSE that the perfect and ideal murder is one that will never be discussed because it will never be discovered. Murderers are the most modest of artists, and alone among the followers of any art are without any vain desire that the world should admire their masterpieces; nay, are often reluctant, as in an excess of Christian humility, to receive the intellectual praises that are their due. In real life the finest achievements are necessarily nameless; not only because the police never discover the murderer, but because they never even discover the murder.

In fiction the same ought to be true, and it may well be maintained that the most mysterious murder of all would be one that remained unknown to the reader—or, perhaps, even to the author. And this in itself opens up a pleasing avenue of fancy. There are a great many natural deaths in novels, and it would be gratifying to reconstruct each of them as a crime committed without even the connivance of the novelist. Somebody said, not without shrewdness, about Mrs. Mackenzie, the Campaigner in "The Newcomes," "The truth is she drank. Thackeray didn't know it; but she drank."

In the same way it would be very satisfactory to show that she was a secret assassin as well as a secret drinker, and that she contrived somehow to murder the old Colonel even in his charitable refuge. Then there is Little Nell, which would be an example not so much of natural death as of natural murder. Here we should have too large and bewildering a choice in apportioning the guilt. Who killed Little Nell ? Who would not have killed Little Nell ? Little Paul in " Dombey and Son " is a much more genuinely pathetic figure ; but there would be a certain thrill in discovering that he was really killed, let us say by Miss Tox, as possibly standing between her and her designs on Mr. Dombey. It would throw light, as it were, on another side of the character of Miss Tox, of which Dickens was evidently quite unaware. Pendennis's mother also died ; and high time too. Somehow I cannot quite bring myself to believe that Laura would have gone quite as far as this, even with the legitimate object of encouraging Arthur Pendennis to make a fresh start and stand on his own feet. But something rather picturesque might be done with the machinations of Blanche Amery, assisted by the technical talent of her admirer, M. Mirabolant, the Cook. Anyhow, it would be quite a pleasant parlour game to go through all the famous novels in which people die in an apparently normal manner, and turn them into detective stories of the most dark and lurid type.

I THINK my favourite murder in real life is the murder (if it was a murder, for even that is doubtful) of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey, which produced the final frenzy about the Popish Plot. Not only were there intensely interesting political and religious problems involved, but the personal problem itself was picturesque in the same sense as a really good detective story. Two details especially have precisely the character that makes such a story : the presence of clues that are not clues, that can baffle and mislead more than they enlighten. The poor magistrate's body was found in a ditch transfixed with his own sword ; but it was also evident that he had been strangled. Any properly constituted person will feel tempted to make a mystery story out of that. There is something of the true dance of death in the suggestion of somebody being hanged and then run through the body with a sword ; or perhaps killed with a sword and then hanged for some reason on a tree. And as the romancer could easily introduce characters like Titus Oates and Shaftesbury and Charles the Second and Pepys, he could have a high old time. And certainly it may be considered a successful murder, for the only people who have been at all clearly shown to be innocent were the people who were hanged for it.

OF murders in fiction I am not so sure, for some of the very best mystery stories in the world, like " The Moonstone " and " Trent's Last Case," do not really revolve round a murder at all. Even Count Fosco, in " The Woman in White," very properly prided himself on his delicacy and humanity in not murdering a lady but only locking her up as a lunatic. I rather distrust those murders which are committed with " some little-known Eastern poison that leaves no traces." It seems to me unfair ; like saying the man was hit with a peculiar sort of Patagonian club that does not make a bruise. A very good method occurred in a story by Mr. Edgar Jepson (" The Tea-Leaf," published in THE STRAND MAGAZINE in October, 1925), in which a man was killed in a Turkish bath with a dagger of ice or some liquid chemically frozen very hard, which immediately melted ; the only perfect way of getting rid of the weapon. There are a great many other excellent schemes which I cannot at the moment remember ; and as I have no intention of applying them in a really practical and professional way, I will leave it to a more scientific age, freed from the trammels of dogmatic morality, to discover the difficulties and defects which are probably to be found in each.

THE MONOCLE

By A. M. BURRAGE

Illustrated by
LINDSAY CABLE

HENRY CAMDEN found it by treading on it. Strangely enough, and most fortunately for himself, he did not break it. His foot, slurring over the uncarpeted floor of the third-class compartment, encountered a sudden unevenness of the smooth surface, and he looked down. Lying half under his left shoe was a monocle with a silk cord attached.

Camden picked it up, wiped it, and examined it curiously. The cord, which he had expected to find broken, was intact, and this set him wondering how it had come to be lost. Then he looked around the compartment.

He was one of ten who sat like roosting fowls on two long perches. The similarity ended there. Every one of the ten was screened behind a newspaper. The smoke of four pipes and six cigarettes blended into a fuggy haze which struggled unsuccessfully to find an outlet through a few inches of open window. There were eight bowler hats in the compartment, including his own. Ten underlings were on their way to their respective offices in the City.

It took Camden about a minute to realize that the monocle had probably not been dropped by any of his fellow-travellers. He knew most of them at least by sight. Moreover, the only occupant of the compartment, when he and eight others had boarded the train at Surbiton, was sitting in one of the corners at the far end.

Camden knew that his find had no intrinsic value. It would be mere waste of time to hand it over as lost property. So he obeyed an instinct which had always prompted him to keep what he found, no matter how useless it might be, and thrust the monocle and cord into his pocket. He told himself vaguely that it might come in useful for something, but he had no thought of wearing it. In his estimation monocles were "swank." The silly young ass in the farcical comedy, the

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grotesque dude in the comic paper, the elderly *roué* of the melodrama—for such as these were monocles on silk cords. If a young clerk who, during the last seven or eight years, had been struggling in vain for advancement dared to wear such a thing, he would be laughed at by everybody, and it might even cost him his job. But perhaps he might wear it sometimes for fun, just for a moment or two at a time, when he wanted to raise a laugh.

HE opened the newspaper on his knees, and for a little while forgot all about the monocle. It was not until the train had passed Clapham Junction, and he had reached the back page of his paper, that he remembered it again. The back page was dedicated exclusively to photographs. He glanced over them idly until a small one at the bottom arrested his attention. Beneath it he read the caption: "Lord Cumberstaff on his way to open the new home for the orphans of bus-drivers."

Not much of Lord Cumberstaff was visible, save his head, crowned by a tall hat, and as much of his chest as was reached by the white V of his waistcoat slip; but Camden felt his attention drawn to the face. His lordship was a middle-aged, well-preserved man, with a round, solid face not unlike Camden's. But there was a subtle difference which, for some moments, the young man tried in vain to analyse. "He's so sure of himself," he thought. "He knows he's Somebody, and looks as if he knows it. He'd have got there all right even if he hadn't been a lord."

And it was just then that Camden noticed that Lord Cumberstaff was wearing a monocle, and that, so far from making his lordship look ridiculous, it seemed to him to give the final and striking touch to a commanding appearance.

"They suit some chaps, those things," thought Camden, "dashed if they don't! Perhaps after all——"

Who shall gauge the secret vanities in the mind of man, and who, knowing his own, shall dare laugh at his brother's? Camden had already assured himself that he was a little—if only a very little—like Lord Cumberstaff, and he began to be irked by a curiosity to see how he looked with a monocle.

Sheepishly and secretively, while the crowd trekked down one of the long platforms at Waterloo towards the barrier, Camden took the monocle from his pocket, slipped the cord around his neck, and screwed the glass into his left eye. He found that he could hold it there without difficulty. Moreover, it did not obscure his vision; in fact, it helped rather than hindered. By the time he had reached the barrier he had assured himself that the find was a lucky one, and that for optical reasons he ought to make use of it.

Instead of making his way straight out of the station Camden crossed to a tobacco kiosk, where a sheet of plate glass gave him

"Er—hullo, there's some change in you and I can't think—— Oh, of course, you're wearing one of those monocle things."

back a blurred reflection of himself. He lingered, pretending to examine the contents of the window, vain in a sense in which he had never before been vain.

The single eyeglass suited him. It was a revelation. It supplied just that subtle Something which, he felt, had always been lacking in his appearance. So far from giving him that look of the brainless ass in farcical comedy, it lent him an air of wisdom; so far from making him look foolish, it lent him dignity. The thing seemed incredible, but there was the evidence of his own sight. He was now determined to continue wearing the monocle. It was worth a little chaff to attain this new air of distinction and quiet authority.

It was his custom to walk to the office every morning. This took about half an hour, gave him the benefit of exercise, and brought him there punctually. To that end, and moving with an unwonted spring in his stride, he passed out and down the stone steps of the York Road exit.

A line of taxis was drawn up against the kerb at the bottom, and a grey-whiskered

veteran, seeing him, saluted and nodded towards his vehicle.

Now the taxi-drivers who frequent Waterloo Station at the hour when the suburban trains are unloading their cargoes of City workers are wise in their generation, and almost uncanny in their ability to

discriminate a possible fare from the hosts who flock to the Tubes and buses. Hitherto they had stood stolidly silent while Camden passed them. Never before at that hour had his custom been solicited. A queer thrill, which was very good to feel, quickened his heart.

He nodded carelessly. It seemed the natural thing to do. He gave the address of his office to the man, got in, and sat wondering at himself. Five minutes later he tendered two shillings for the one-and-threepence marked on the clock, checked a hand-to-pocket gesture on the part of the driver with a wave of the hand, and turned away with an air of nonchalance. On his way up the stairs he assured himself that the two shillings had not been wasted. Previously he had often spent much more than two shillings without achieving the same subtle but deep sense of satisfaction.

The big office in which he worked was empty until he entered it. He was rather more than twenty minutes before his time. Still, he had his paper and could sit and read until the others arrived and the routine of the day began.

But as he crossed the floor towards his place, the glass-panelled door leading into the governors' room was thrust open, and the managing director looked out.

Camden was surprised to see him, but not so surprised as he might have been if he had not heard that the Great Man's devotion to business often took him to the office long before anybody else, and kept him there until long after all but his long-suffering stenographer had gone. This morning he was in an affable mood.

"Oh, it's you, Camden, is it?" he remarked. "Good morning. You're early."

"Good morning, sir," said Camden, feeling that warm glow which suffuses all those who are caught in the act of performing a good deed. "Yes, I thought I'd make a good start. Plenty to do, sir."

"That's the right idea. Er—hullo, what's the matter with you this morning? There's some change in you, and I can't think—— Oh, of course, you're wearing one of those monocle things."

"Yes, sir." Camden smiled, sheepishly. "My oculist advised me that I ought to wear one."

The managing director smiled and nodded hearty approval.

"Well, it suits you," he said. "Yes, it suits you admirably. It gives you quite another look. It's really remarkable how a small detail like that can change a man. Go on wearing it, Camden. Don't mind if people laugh at you at first; go on wearing it."

And he shut the door.

THREE hours later the managing director was talking to another director.

"I've found the man for our stand at Olympia," he announced. "Young Camden. I thought of him before, but I wasn't quite sure about his appearance. But now he's wearing one of those monocles, and the effect is quite extraordinary."

"Um," said the other director, doubtfully. "Um" is always a safe thing to say, because subsequently it can be translated into "I always said so," or "I was always against it," according to the needs of the occasion. A good word, this, for the glorious band of brothers who make a point of being right after the event.

"It's given him," continued the other, "a kind of distinguished look, which makes you think he's got something in his head—as I believe he has. Besides, he's been here some time and always does his work thoroughly. I really believe he's got the

business at heart. For instance, he was here this morning about twenty minutes before anybody else. One likes to encourage a fellow like that."

"Um," said the other director, with a little more feeling.

CAMDEN learned his destiny early in the afternoon. He had read of men treading on air, but never realized the meaning of that overworked phrase until he was on his way home that evening. His dreams were becoming tangible at last. The first of the long series had already materialized. He was out of the rut now, with a chance to use his brains and achieve obvious results. He had just been promised a big increase of salary, and a commission. Down in Coventry the light car destined for him since the beginning of time was almost ready for the road. He had his foot on the ladder, and there should be no pulling him down. And he owed it all to the monocle.

Already he regarded it half as a mascot. Without it he would have lacked the vanity which made him charter the taxi-cab in the morning. Without the taxi-cab he would not have arrived so early at the office on that fortunate occasion when the Chief happened to be about, and thus set the seal upon his reputation for industry. The change in his appearance might not have been noticed until too late. That little circle of glass with its silk cord attachment had been a good friend to him in more ways than one.

He walked to his boarding-house at Surbiton with the air of a free man living in a free country, and ate with gusto the dull, half-cold meal which passed for dinner. He then went upstairs, added a dash of gaiety to his adornment by putting on a club tie, and set off to call on Mary Saunders.

Mary Saunders lived in Kingston, half a mile away. She was the girl whom, for the past year, Henry Camden had dreamed of marrying. But he no longer dreamed; he was jolly well going to marry her. Hitherto he had been a little scared of Mary and terrified of her father. Old Saunders was wealthy and retired and had little regard for young men who were apparently content to remain in a groove. More than once he had hinted to Camden that his was not a house of public entertainment.

Until that day Henry Camden had cherished no real hope of winning Mary. He had dreamed of her as boys dream of treasure islands, and had fluttered around her like a moth, asking to be scorched. But all that was changed now that he was on the flood-tide of success. He was still nervous of Mary, but it was a nervousness sprung from her goodness and wisdom. For her father he no longer cared a row of pins.

His luck held good. Mary was at home, but her father was not. He might, however, return at any moment.

Mary regarded her suitor with an expression which reminded him of the managing director's look that morning—although, he was careful to assure himself, hers was a much softer and sweeter look.

"Why, Henry!" she exclaimed, "you're wearing an eyeglass! It suits you, too. You look quite—quite distinguished."

Camden laughed happily.

"Whether it suits me or not," he said, "I shall have to go on wearing it. You see, the firm has given me a leg-up. I'm to take charge of their stand at Olympia. One way and another, that means about twice my present salary, and all sorts of prospects, and as the Chief likes me with this bit of window in my eye, I suppose I must humour him by continuing to wear it."

"Henry!" exclaimed Mary, half-way between amazement and joy.

"But I'm glad you like me with it," he continued, quelling a sudden disposition of his voice to falter, "because you'll be seeing me so much oftener now."

"Shall I?" murmured Mary, lowering her eyes.

"Every day," he whispered, "as long as we both live."

And he clipped her suddenly in his arms.

Ten minutes later Mary removed her head from a very comfortable shoulder to whisper:—

"I don't know what father will say when he comes in."

"I'll wait and hear," Camden replied, grimly.

He did; and next day he bought the ring.

ONE evening twelve years later, Henry Camden, now a director of the firm, was dining at Michel's Restaurant with Stephen Grant, a director of another business. The two men had just completed a deal which was, strangely enough, equally satisfactory to both parties. This dinner was the result. It was an excellent dinner, as indeed it ought to have been, since only the wealthy can afford to dine at Michel's.

Stephen Grant was a man of about Camden's age, and, like Camden, he had made his own way in the world. Unlike Camden, he was given to telling others the history of his career. To-night he was in a communicative mood, for which the bottle with gold-foil at its neck, which swam in half-molten ice in a silver bucket on the table between them, may have been partly responsible.

"I notice you always wear a monocle, Camden," he remarked, thoughtfully. "It suits you, but they don't suit everybody.

I used to wear one once. Do you know, I attribute my success in life to a photograph on the back page of a newspaper."

Camden smiled to himself. There was a hint of reminiscence in the smile, but he said nothing.

"I always meant to get on in the world," Grant continued. "I had big ideas of myself, big ambitions, and I wasn't afraid of work. I worked like a horse for the firm I was with, but nobody ever seemed to realize that I was above the average.

"In those days I used to wear a monocle. I thought I looked well in it, and I thought it helped to impress my personality on people's memories. 'Grant? Oh, yes, that fellow who wears a monocle.' That sort of thing. And, my boy, I was all wrong. You've got the sort of face which can carry one of those things, and I hadn't.

"I realized it suddenly one morning. It was about twelve years ago. I was living down at Esher then. I got into an empty compartment one morning on my way up to the City, and opened my paper. And then suddenly it came over me that my beastly eyeglass was standing in my way. The firm didn't want a fop; it wanted a worker, and a worker with brains and personality.

"It was a photograph on the back page which brought it home to me. Lord Cumberstaff on his way to open that home for the orphans of London bus-drivers. I glanced at it, and thought what an awful ass he looked, and then presently I realized why. He was wearing a monocle! Excuse me, Camden, but they don't suit everybody, do they? He *did* look an ass!

"Why, Henry!" she exclaimed, "you're wearing an eyeglass! It suits you, too. You look quite—quite distinguished."

"And then in a flash of inspiration I knew how I appeared to other people, and why they kept on overlooking me at the office. When I act, I act quickly. I just slipped the silk cord over my head and shied the monocle to the other end of the compartment.

"The train filled up at Surbiton. About nine other fellows got in. I saw one chap pick up the monocle, look round to see if anybody claimed it, and then stick it in his pocket. He was welcome! I'd finished with it!"

Complacency swelled the expanse of shirt-front covering Mr. Stephen Grant's chest.

"Since that day," he concluded, impressively, "I never looked back."

THE CINQUEVALLI OF THE BILLIARD-TABLE

AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD de KUYPER

By

FENN SHERIE

Mr. Richard de Kuyper.

FLICK!

With a dexterous movement of the fingers the ball is dropped on to the green cloth. It bounces from the table, mounts a pair of cues placed close together, and, spinning gaily, runs up them until it reaches another ball resting against the cushion. Then suddenly, as if by magic, reverse rotation appears to set in. It runs down the cues again, up another pair set at a steep incline to the top of an inverted pool basket, and finally down the other side to complete a cannon by striking a third ball which lies at the far end of the table!

That is what Mr. Richard de Kuyper, the hand-stroke billiards champion, describes as a "Triple Triangular Switchback Cannon," and it is only one of many marvellous examples of digital dexterity in his repertoire of trick strokes.

Mr. de Kuyper, who, despite his fancy name, is a Londoner bred and born—those who know him intimately call him Dick Cooper—has been training billiard-balls to perform intricate evolutions for the past fifty years, and since 1901 he has remained the champion hand-stroke player, having beaten all comers, hand and cue players alike, who have challenged him.

The idea of playing billiards with the hands is not new. It was introduced into this country somewhere in the 'seventies by a pair of Frenchmen, the Brothers Izard, and later developed by Herbert Roberts, brother of the great John Roberts, and

The Triple Triangular Switchback Cannon.

others. No exponent of the game, however, has reduced hand-play to such an exact science as the present champion has done.

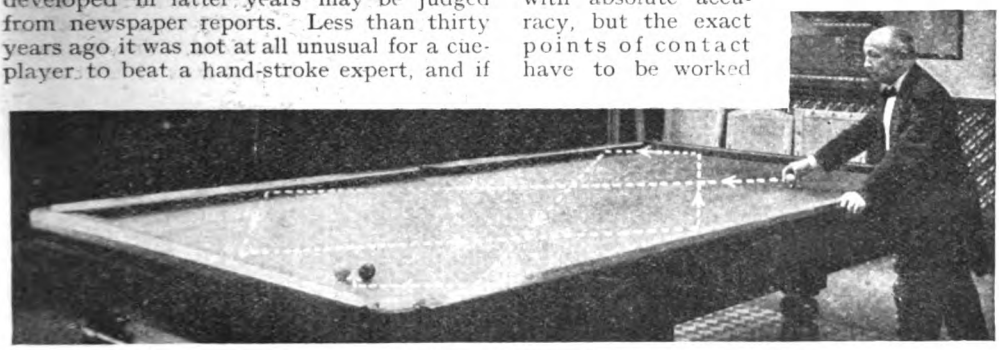
In contests between a hand-stroke player and one who uses a cue, it should be explained, the former is allowed to pick up his ball and carry it to any part of the table he wishes. Otherwise he must play strict billiards. This condition is made because the hand-stroke player depends entirely upon the amount of rotation he imparts to the ball with his fingers, and in most cases he commences his strokes by dropping his ball against the first object-ball. Even with this advantage, however, the hand-stroke player requires to have exceptional skill in the regulation of the rotation and the judgment of angles if he wishes to put up a good fight against a champion with the cue. To what degree of mathematical precision this skill has been developed in latter years may be judged from newspaper reports. Less than thirty years ago it was not at all unusual for a cue-player to beat a hand-stroke expert, and if the latter made a break of a hundred odd he was extremely proud of himself. To-day, however, Mr. de Kuyper has brought certain strokes to such a pitch of perfection that once he gets the balls into a particular position he can keep on scoring with such monotonous accuracy and such speed that the marker is often quite unable to keep pace with him! Indeed, he declares that he would be willing to give Willie Smith ten thousand in a game of twenty thousand up, and undertake to make a five-thousand break in the course of the contest.

"Magnificent—but it is not billiards," you may say.

Well, the hand-stroke player would be the first to admit that. He regards these contests more in the nature of an entertainment, and, as a rule, only undertakes to play brief games as a kind of "side-show" at big exhibition matches.

Mr. de Kuyper's speciality, in fact, is a demonstration of trick strokes which are even more amazing—and certainly more amusing—than those which he displays when playing an opponent. Some of these are illustrated on these pages, and although detailed descriptions are given beneath the pictures there are one or two which should be singled out for special mention.

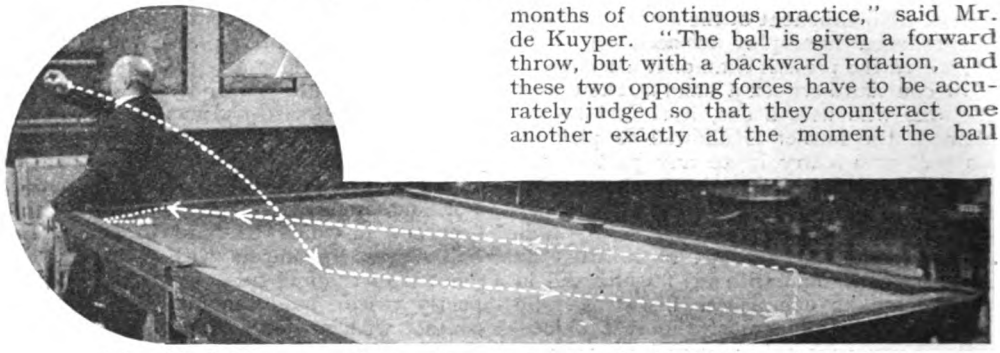
A stroke which will be appreciated by all who play billiards, or who have dabbled in the game, is the Seven-Cushion Cannon. For manipulative skill combined with accuracy it would be hard to beat. The ball leaves the fingers with a tremendous amount of running spin or side, and travels nearly twice round the table, coming into contact with no fewer than seven cushions before making the cannon. Those who have made a study of angles in billiards will realize that such a stroke would be extremely difficult with a cue, for the sharp angles which the ball takes are produced by rotation which few cueists could impart. Yet not only has this rotation to be judged with absolute accuracy, but the exact points of contact have to be worked out almost to the fraction of an inch. And when it is realized that the amount of "side" and the direction of the ball have to be varied according to the smoothness of the cloth and the resilience of the cushions, the delicacy of Mr. de Kuyper's touch will be appreciated the more.



The Seven-Cushion Cannon.

"No two tables are exactly alike," he told me, "and it generally takes me five or ten minutes to get acquainted with the peculiarities of a strange one. As soon as I have settled down, however, and provided I am in good health, I generally manage to bring off most of my shots at the first attempt."

Another amazing stroke is the "Blind Cannon," in which Mr. de Kuyper turns his back so that he can see neither the table nor the object-balls, then throws a ball over his left shoulder with such accuracy that it travels right round the table, strikes four cushions, and finally makes a cannon close by the point where it started. For this shot he uses smaller balls, for, as he explained, dropping a full-sized ball from above the

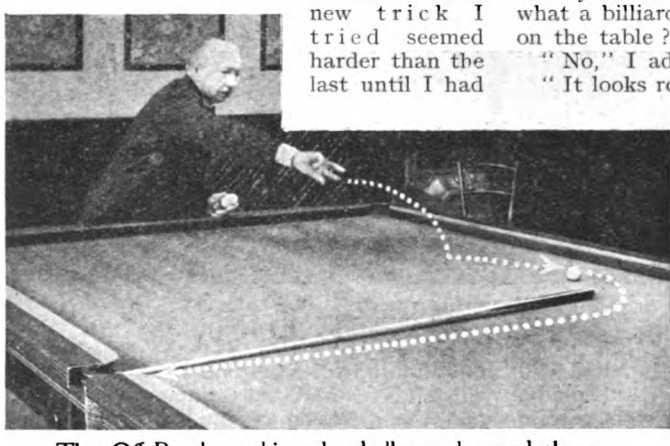


The Blind Cannon on four cushions, played with the back to the table.

shoulder is liable to cause damage to the table.

"I suppose the Blind Cannon is one of your most difficult tricks?" I suggested.

"It was—when I was learning it," said Mr. de Kuyper, with a laugh. "In fact, they all were. Each new trick I tried seemed harder than the last until I had mastered it. After that it became as easy as the rest."



The Off-Break, making the ball travel round the cue before entering the pocket.

"But which trick took the longest time to acquire?" I asked.

"This one," he replied.

Then, taking a ball in his hand and walking to the top of the table, he snapped his fingers and the sphere sped spinning towards baulk.

"Stop!" he commanded, suddenly—and the ball stopped right in the centre of the "D"!

"That took me over six months of continuous practice," said Mr. de Kuyper. "The ball is given a forward throw, but with a backward rotation, and these two opposing forces have to be accurately judged so that they counteract one another exactly at the moment the ball reaches the 'D.' If the forward throw is too strong, the ball goes too far and strikes the cushion, and if the reverse rotation is too strong it starts running back towards me when or before it reaches the spot where I want it to stop.

"By the way," he added, "do you know what a billiard-ball first does when it stops on the table?"

"No," I admitted.

"It looks round."

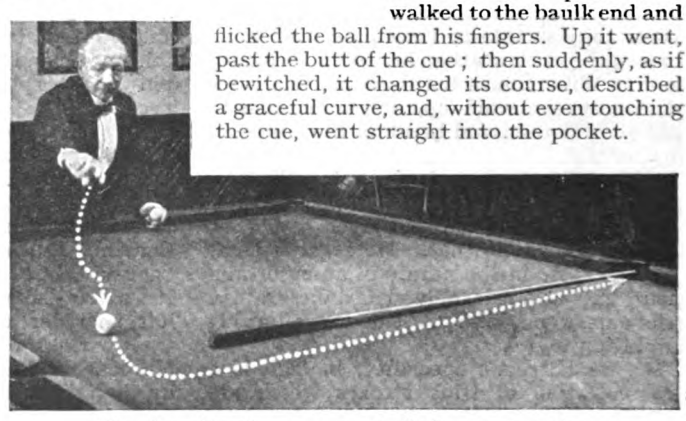
Mr. de Kuyper waited until I laughed and then joined in with me.

"They sometimes call me the Clown of Billiards," he said. "I like to have a little joke now and then."

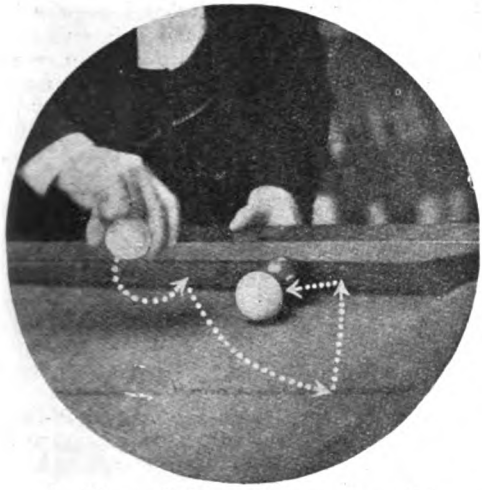
Then the skittish young fellow of sixty-five picked up another ball.

"Now I'll show you how to bowl an off-break," he said.

Placing a cue at right-angles across the table so that the tip rested in the mouth of the pocket, he walked to the baulk end and flicked the ball from his fingers. Up it went, past the butt of the cue; then suddenly, as if bewitched, it changed its course, described a graceful curve, and, without even touching the cue, went straight into the pocket.



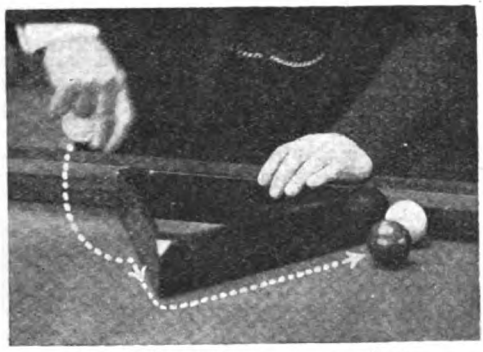
The Leg-Break—a reversal of the same action.



A Three-Cushion Cannon, in which the ball strikes three cushions before making the cannon.

Then he reversed the position of the cue, took another ball, and, using the same hand, bowled what he described as a "leg-break."

"That is what happens when you impart a lot of running side to a ball and do not let it strike a cushion," he explained. "Now I will show you what freakish angles the spinning ball will take when it comes into contact with the cushions."



A right-handed cannon round the pyramid triangle

He placed two balls side by side near the mouth of the top pocket, then with a flick of the fingers and a twist of the wrist he dropped his ball on to the table. It struck the cushion nearest to him, and, instead of bounding off at the natural angle, it took the erratic course indicated by the dotted lines on the accompanying photograph and eventually made a cannon!

Mr. de Kuyper showed me many other extraordinary strokes. He made cannons round the pyramid triangle as seen in the accompanying photograph. He stood at the foot of the table, placed two balls on the floor at his feet; then he sent a third ball spinning up the table, where it mounted the cushion, dropped to the floor, and ran back again beneath the table to make the cannon at his feet! He made another ball strike an object-ball, mount the cushion, run right along the top of it until it reached the end, then drop to the table again just in time to strike a third ball and complete the cannon.

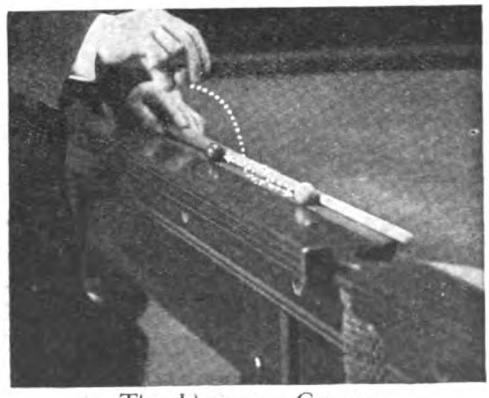
Perhaps the most uncanny trick of all, however, was what he called the Hesitating Cannon, which is illustrated on this page.

Placing a cue along the top of the cushion and putting two diminutive balls in position against it, about two feet apart, he threw a third ball on to the cushion at a point about half-way between them. It ran up to the first ball, rebounded, ran back to the half-way position, and then suddenly stopped, spinning violently.

"Come along! come along!" Mr. de Kuyper commanded with mock impatience. Then the ball, after hesitating for two or three seconds, continued on its way until it struck the red and completed the cannon!

"A man once offered to pay me twenty-five pounds if I would teach him that shot in a week," he told me. "As a matter of fact, although it is very spectacular it is not quite so difficult as it appears, and I taught him to do it in five minutes. However, he was perfectly satisfied with his bargain and paid up without a murmur. I wish I could find a few more pupils like that!

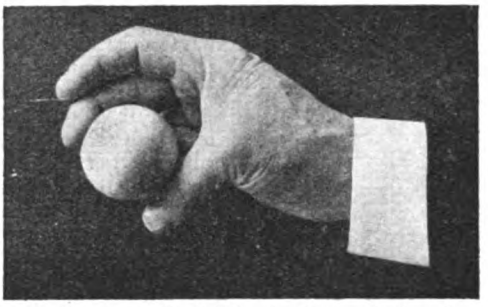
"Talking of pupils, I have not yet found a youngster to take my place when I retire from the world of billiards, which I hope to do shortly. Many young men have



The Hesitating Cannon.

The ball travels to the white, returns to the point indicated by the dotted circle, hesitates, and finally completes the cannon.

undertaken a series of twelve lessons of an hour each under my tuition, but so far not one of them has stayed the course. They find it is too much like hard work! And it is hard work, too. Look at my right hand and see the corns I have developed on the second finger and thumb. Notice the abnormal development of the muscles. You see, I started to amuse myself with hand-strokes when I was sixteen years old, and I have been hard at it ever since.



A "close-up" of Mr. de Kuyper's hand, showing how he holds the ball. Note the abnormal muscular development.

"When I first saw Herbert Roberts give a display and decided that I would like to follow in his tracks, I wrote to his brother, the famous John Roberts, telling him of my ambition to perform trick shots in public and asking his advice as to what I ought to do. His reply was a model of brevity—just one word on a postcard: 'Practise.'

"I followed his advice, spending several hours a day at it until I became quite proficient. And although it was not until I reached the age of forty that I took up hand-stroke billiards as a profession, I have been practising steadily ever since. As a young man I used to throw a peg-top the entire length of a cricket pitch, imparting so much rotation with my fingers that it would continue to spin, on a smooth surface, quite a considerable time after it had landed. Now that I have become more experienced, however, and am able to depend more upon skill than upon strength, I find that the only practice I require is to keep my fingers supple by a few simple movements such as these."

Mr. de Kuyper took a boy's peg-top from his pocket, threw it into the air with a sharp twist, and caught it spinning on the palm of his hand.

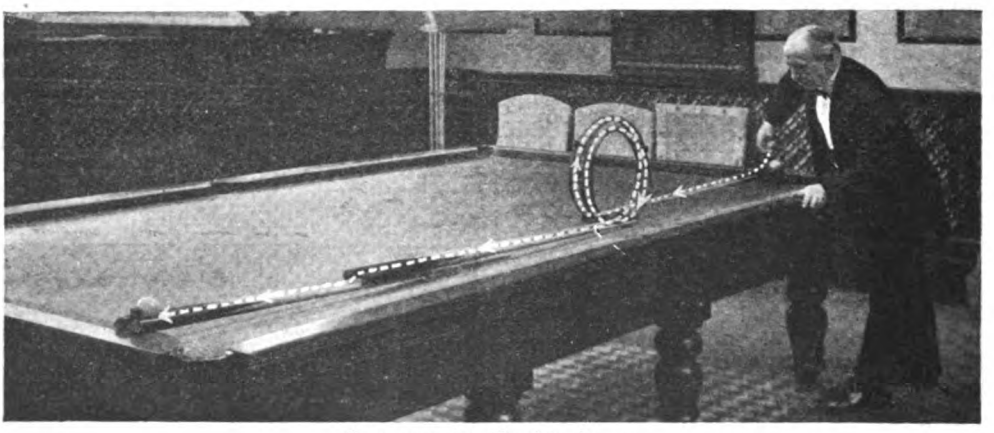
"I do that exercise whenever I get a spare moment, in the train or whilst walking in the street," he said.

"Here's another one."

He took a golf-ball from his pocket and threw it about four feet in the air. It fell to the ground over two yards in front of him; then, instead of bouncing forward, it rebounded to his hand in a graceful curve, like a boomerang.

"Now, as a final demonstration of the strength of the spin that may be imparted to a billiard-ball, I will show you the trick I call Looping the Double Loop."

He erected the apparatus shown in the photograph—which, by the way, he made himself from two ordinary toy hoops—and placed the cues into position to act as rails.



Looping the Double Loop.

Then he fixed two balls upon these, at either end of the table. Taking a third ball, he gave it a sharp flick and released it. It struck the first ball, sped down the incline, neatly looped the two loops, and then continued careering merrily up the remaining cues until it struck the ball at the opposite end of the table!

No wonder Tom Newman describes him as the Cinquevalli of the Billiard-Table!

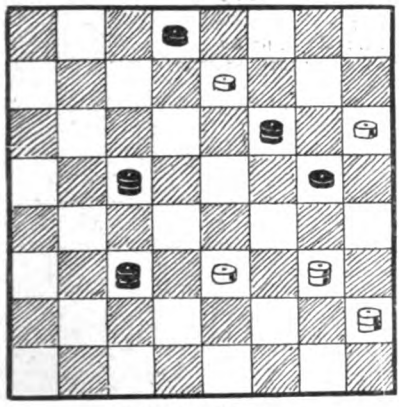
PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

833.—EASY DRAUGHTS.

HERE is an easy draughts problem for the beginner. It is by H. J. Williams. The reader will, I think, find the strategy very interesting.

BLACK—5 PIECES.



WHITE—5 PIECES.

White to move and win.

834.—OUT AND HOME.

MR. WILKINSON walked from his country house into the neighbouring town at the rate of five miles per hour, and, as he was a little tired, he made the return journey at the rate of three miles per hour. As the double journey took him exactly seven hours, can you tell the distance from his house to the town?

835.—AN OLD ENIGMA.

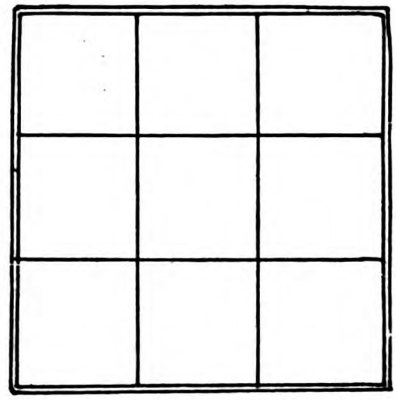
A HUNDRED and one by fifty divide,
And if then nought be rightly applied,
And your calculation agrees with mine,
Then the answer will be one taken from nine.

836.—ALPHABET WORDS.

WE are all familiar with the fact that the sound of certain letters of the alphabet will present words. Thus if we were asked to express a word of one syllable with a single letter we should promptly reply, A (aye), B (bee), C (sea), and so on. If we were asked for a word of two syllables with two letters we might give MT (empty), XL (excel). If a word of three syllables with three letters were required we might produce NTT (entity). We should not pass ODM (odium) because the actual pronunciation is odi-em. Now the reader will find it an interesting little puzzle to discover a word of five syllables that can be perfectly expressed in this way with five different letters of the alphabet.

837.—A TINY MAGIC SQUARE.

THIS is a little puzzle for my more juvenile readers. Write in the three figures 1, 2, 3, in this order, in a



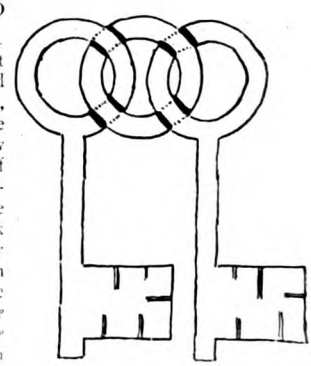
row horizontally. Then put down two more rows of the same three figures (in any order) so as to form a magic square, the columns, rows, and two diagonals all adding up alike.

Uncle Jasper's Puzzle Book—Solutions.

MONKEYS AND NUTS.

THE smallest number of nuts that will comply with the conditions is 2,179. The best way of solving this is to deal first with the first two cases and find that 34 (or 34 added to 143 or any multiple of it) will satisfy the case for 11 and 13 monkeys. You then have to find the lowest number of this form that will satisfy the condition for the 17 monkeys.

THE KEYS AND RING.



FIRST cut out the two keys and ring in one piece, as shown in the illustration. Now cut only half through the cardboard along the eight little dark lines, and similarly cut half through on the eight little dotted lines *on the other side of the cardboard*. Then

insert the penknife and split the cardboard below the four little squares formed by these short lines, and the three pieces will come apart. The two keys will then be quite loose on the ring, and yet all will be solid and without join.

THE ARAB'S PUZZLE.

$6543 \times 98271 = 642987153$.

BLOWING OUT THE CANDLE.

THE trick is to lower the funnel until the dotted line, C A, on the top in the original illustration, is in line with the flame of the candle. An attempt to blow the candle out with the flame opposite the centre of the opening of the funnel is hopeless.

A MOTORING PUZZLE.

ATKINSON had gone 288 miles and the American only 216 miles when they met. So the distance was 504 miles from Blue Gap to Sandyville.

FIND THE SQUARES.

IF you add 125 to 100 and also to 164 you get two square numbers, 225 and 289, the squares of 15 and 17 respectively.

MY SOUTH AMERICAN TOUR.

THE tour can be performed by leaving unvisited only one place, and that place may be either C, D, E, F, G, H, I, K, L, M, or O. It cannot be either of the other places. Let us assume that he decided to leave M unvisited. Then all the other places may be visited in this order: A, U, D, Q, F, B, K, S, N, X, O, V, I, T, L, Y, E, W, G, R, C, P, H, Z.

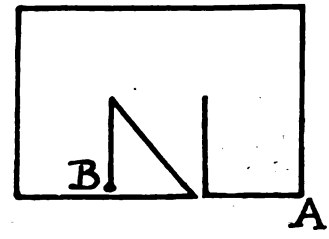
THE SPANIARD'S CHESS PUZZLE.

PLAY as follows: 1. P—Q Kt 4, 1. P—Q 4; 2. P—Kt 5, 2. B—R 6; 3. P takes B, 3. P—Q B 4; 4. B—R 3, 4. P—Q 5; 5. Kt—K B 3, 5. P—K 4; 6. B—K Kt 2, 6. P—B 5; 7. Kt—Q B 3, 7. P—Q 6; 8. B P takes P, 8. P—K 5; 9. P takes K P, 9. P—K B 4; 10. P takes P, 10. P—K Kt 3; 11. P takes P, 11. Kt—Q 2; 12. P—Q Kt 6, 12. Q R P takes P; 13. B—Q B 5, 13. P takes B; 14. Kt—Q 4, 14. P takes Kt; 15. B—Q B 6, 15. P takes B; 16. Kt—Q 5, 16. P takes Kt; 17. P—Q R 4, 17. P—Q B 6; 18. R—R 3, 18. P—B 7; 19. R—K Kt sq, 19. P—B 8 (becomes Queen); 20. K R—Kt 3, 20. B—R 3; 21. Q R—K 3 ch., 21. P takes R; 22. Q P takes P, 22. B—K B 5; 23. P takes B, 23. Q—Kt 4; 24. P takes Q, 24. Kt—R 3; 25. P takes Kt, 25. Q—Q B 5; 26. Q—B 2, 26. Kt—K 4; 27. Q—K 4, 27. P takes Q; 28. R—K B 3, 28. P takes R; 29. P takes B P, 29. Kt—Kt 5; 30. B P takes Kt, 30. R—K Kt sq; 31. P—Q R 5, 31. R takes R P; 32. P takes P, 32. R—R 4; 33. P takes R, 33. R—Kt 6; 34. B P takes R, 34. Q—K R 5; 35. P takes Q.

And after White's thirty-fifth move the required position has been reached.

A JUVENILE POSER.

THE solution consists, as will be seen from the illustration, in enclosing the letter in a frame, and thus so completely deceiving the eye that one loses the



original L and sees nothing but the framed N. It will be seen that by starting at the lower end of the L—at the point A—and continuing until we reach B, the whole can be traced in one continuous line.

BUYING PEACHES.

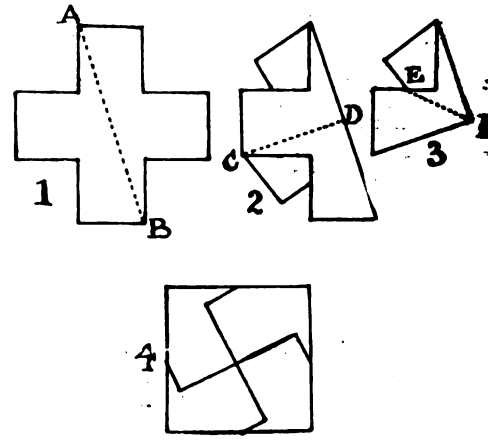
IF you pay 8s. a dozen this would be at the same rate as 48s. for six dozen or 32s. for four dozen. Therefore the cost of a single peach would be just two-thirds of a shilling—8d.

THE TOWER OF PISA.

THE ball would come to rest after travelling 218 feet 9½in. This is an extremely close approximation.

CHING'S CUTTING-OUT PUZZLE.

FIRST fold the cross along the dotted line A B in figure 1. You then have it in the form shown in the figure 2. Next fold it along the dotted line C D (where



D is, of course, the centre of the cross), and you get the form shown in figure 3. Now take your scissors and cut through E F, and the four pieces, all of the same size and shape, will fit together and form a square as shown in figure 4.

FEB 7 1927

ew PETER JACKSON Stor

GILBERT FRANKAU

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

this
imate
XO
is
& Drink
you.

New Adventure of

SHERLOCK HOLMES

By

CONAN DOYLE

OXO
"The perfect
11 o' clock"
OXO
CUBES
THE "OXO" HABIT

THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for February, 1927.

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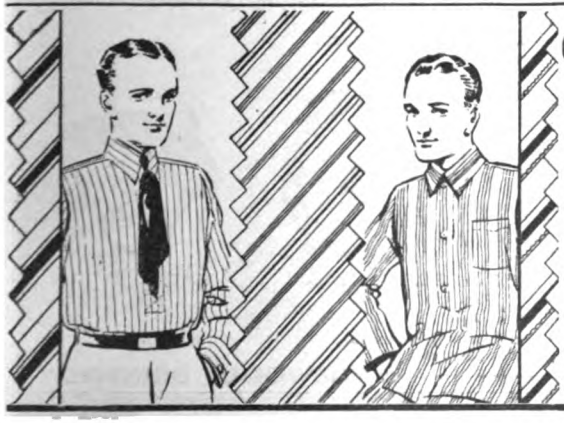

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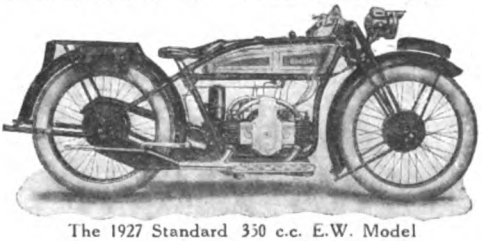

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FEBRUARY, 1927.

"AS I SLIPPED THE BARS THE LION BOUNDED OUT, AND WAS ON ME IN AN INSTANT."

(See page 114.)

A NEW SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY

THE ADVENTURE OF THE VEILED LODGER

BY

A. Conan Doyle

Illustrated by FRANK WILES

WHEN one considers that Mr. Sherlock Holmes was in active practice for twenty-three years, and that during seventeen of these I was allowed to co-operate with him and to keep notes of his doings, it will be clear that I have a mass of material at my command. The problem has always been not to find but to choose. There is the long row of year-books which fill a shelf, and there are the despatch-cases filled with documents, a perfect quarry for the student not only of crime but of the social and official scandals of the late Victorian era. Concerning these latter, I may say that the writers of agonized letters, who beg that the honour of their families or the reputation of famous forbears may not be touched, have nothing to fear. The discretion and high sense of professional honour which have always distinguished my friend are still at work in the choice of these memoirs, and no confidence will be abused. I deprecate, however, in the strongest way the attempts which have been made lately to get at and to destroy these papers. The source of these outrages is known, and if they are repeated I have Mr. Holmes's authority for saying that the whole story concerning the politician, the lighthouse, and the trained cormorant will be given to the public. There is at least one reader who will understand.

It is not reasonable to suppose that every one of these cases gave Holmes the opportunity of showing those curious gifts of instinct and observation which I have endeavoured to set forth in these memoirs. Sometimes he had with much effort to pick the fruit, sometimes it fell easily into his lap. But the most terrible human tragedies were often involved in these cases which brought him the fewest personal opportunities, and it is one of these which I now desire to record. In telling it I have made a slight change of name and place, but otherwise the facts are as stated.

One forenoon—it was early in 1896—I received a hurried note from Holmes asking for my attendance. When I arrived I found him seated in a smoke-laden atmosphere, with an elderly, motherly woman of the buxom landlady type in the corresponding chair in front of him.

"This is Mrs. Merrilow, of South Brixton," said my friend, with a wave of the hand. "Mrs. Merrilow does not object to tobacco, Watson, if you wish to indulge your filthy habits. Mrs. Merrilow has an interesting story to tell which may well lead to further developments in which your presence may be useful."

"Anything I can do——"

"You will understand, Mrs. Merrilow, that if I come to Mrs. Ronder I should prefer to have a witness. You will make her understand that before we arrive."

"Lord bless you, Mr. Holmes," said our visitor, "she is that anxious to see you that you might bring the whole parish at your heels!"

"Then we shall come early in the afternoon. Let us see that we have our facts

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correct before we start. If we go over them it will help Dr. Watson to understand the situation. You say that Mrs. Ronder has been your lodger for seven years and that you have only once seen her face."

"And I wish to God I had not!" said Mrs. Merrilow.

"It was, I understand, terribly mutilated."

"Well, Mr. Holmes, you would hardly say it was a face at all. That's how it looked. Our milkman got a glimpse of her once peeping out of the upper window, and he dropped his tin and the milk all over the front garden. That is the kind of face it is. When I saw her—I happened on her unawares—she covered up quick, and then she said, 'Now, Mrs. Merrilow, you know at last why it is that I never raise my veil.'"

"Do you know anything about her history?"

"Nothing at all."

"Did she give references when she came?"

"No, sir, but she gave hard cash, and plenty of it. A quarter's rent right down on the table in advance and no arguing about terms. In these times a poor woman like me can't afford to turn down a chance like that."

"Did she give any reason for choosing your house?"

"Mine stands well back from the road and is more private than most. Then, again, I only take the one, and I have no family of my own. I reckon she had tried others and found that mine suited her best. It's privacy she is after, and she is ready to pay for it."

"You say that she never showed her face from first to last save on the one accidental occasion. Well, it is a very remarkable story, most remarkable, and I don't wonder that you want it examined."

"I don't, Mr. Holmes. I am quite satisfied so long as I get my rent. You could not have a quieter lodger, or one who gives less trouble."

"Then what has brought matters to a head?"

"Her health, Mr. Holmes. She seems to be wasting away. And there's something terrible on her mind. 'Murder!' she cries. 'Murder!' And once I heard her, 'You cruel beast! You monster!' she cried. It was in the night, and it fair rang through the house and sent the shivers through me. So I went to her in the morning. 'Mrs. Ronder,' I says, 'if you have anything that is troubling your soul, there's the clergy,' I says, 'and there's the police. Between them you should get some help.' 'For God's sake not the police!' says she, 'and the clergy can't change what is past. And yet,' she says, 'it would ease my mind if someone knew the truth before I died.' 'Well,' says I, 'if you won't have the regulars, there is this detective man what we read about'—beggin' your pardon, Mr. Holmes. And she, she fair jumped at it. 'That's the man,' says she. 'I wonder I never thought of it before. Bring him here, Mrs. Merrilow, and if he won't come, tell him I am the wife of Ronder's wild beast show. Say that, and give him the name Abbas Parva.' Here it is as she wrote it, Abbas Parva. 'That will bring him, if he's the man I think he is.'"

"And it will, too," remarked Holmes. "Very good, Mrs. Merrilow. I should like to have a little chat with Dr. Watson. That will carry us till lunch-time. About three o'clock you may expect to see us at your house in Brixton."

OUR visitor had no sooner waddled out of the room—no other verb can describe Mrs. Merrilow's method of progression—than Sherlock Holmes threw himself with fierce energy upon the pile of commonplace books in the corner. For a few minutes there was a constant swish of the leaves, and then with a grunt of satisfaction he came upon what he sought. So excited was he that he did not rise, but sat upon the floor like some strange Buddha, with crossed legs, the huge books all round him, and one open upon his knees.

"The case worried me at the time, Watson. Here are my marginal notes to prove it. I confess that I could make nothing of it. And yet I was convinced that the coroner was wrong. Have you no recollection of the Abbas Parva tragedy?"

"None, Holmes."

"And yet you were with me then. But certainly my own impression was very superficial, for there was nothing to go by, and none of the parties had engaged my services. Perhaps you would care to read the papers?"

"Could you not give me the points?"

"That is very easily done. It will probably come back to your memory as I talk. Ronder, of course, was a household word. He was the rival of Wombwell, and of Sanger, one of the greatest showmen of his day. There is evidence, however, that he took to drink, and that both he and his show were on the down grade at the time of the great tragedy. The caravan had halted for the night at Abbas Parva, which is a small village in Berkshire, when this horror occurred. They were on their way to Wimbledon, travelling by road, and they were simply camping, and not exhibiting, as the place is so small a one that it would not have paid them to open.

"They had among their exhibits a very fine North African lion. Sahara King was its name, and it was the habit, both of Ronder and his wife, to give exhibitions inside its cage. Here, you see, is a photograph of the performance, by which you will perceive that Ronder was a huge porcine person, and that the wife was a very magnificent woman. It was deposed at the inquest that there had been some signs that the lion was dangerous, but, as usual, familiarity begat contempt, and no notice was taken of the fact.

"IT was usual for either Ronder or his wife to feed the lion at night. Sometimes one went, sometimes both, but they never allowed anyone else to do it, for they believed that, so long as they were the food carriers, he would regard them as benefactors, and would never molest them. On this particular night, seven years ago, they both went, and a very terrible happening followed, the details of which have never been made clear.

"It seems that the whole camp was roused near midnight by the roars of the animal and the screams of the woman. The different grooms and *employés* rushed from their tents, carrying lanterns, and by their light an awful sight was revealed. Ronder lay with the back of his head crushed in, and deep claw marks across his scalp, some ten yards from the cage, which was open. Close to the door of the cage lay Mrs. Ronder, upon her back, with the creature squatting and snarling above her. It had torn her face in such a fashion that it was never thought that she could live. Several of the circus men, headed by Leonardo the strong man and Griggs the clown, drove the creature off with poles, upon which it sprang back into the cage, and was at once locked in. How it had got loose was a mystery. It was conjectured that the pair intended to enter the cage, but that when the door was loosed the creature bounded out upon them. There was no other point of interest in the evidence, save that the woman in a delirium of agony kept screaming, 'Coward! Coward!' as she was carried back to the van in which they lived. It was six months before she was fit to give evidence, but the inquest was duly held, with the obvious verdict of death from misadventure."

"What alternative could be conceived?" said I.

"You may well say so. And yet there were one or two points which worried young Edmunds, of the Berkshire Constabulary. A smart lad that! He was sent later to Allahabad. That was how I came into the matter, for he dropped in and smoked a pipe or two over it."

"A thin, yellow-haired man?"

"Exactly. I was sure you would pick up the trail presently."

"But what worried him?"

"Well, we were both worried. It was so deucedly difficult to reconstruct the affair. Look at it from the lion's point of view. He is liberated. What does he do? He takes half-a-dozen bounds forward, which brings him to Ronder. Ronder turns to fly—the claw marks were on the back of his head—but the lion strikes him down. Then, instead of bounding on and escaping, he returns to the woman, who was close to the cage, and he knocks her over and chews her face up. Then, again, those cries of hers would seem to imply that her husband had in some way failed her. What could the poor devil have done to help her? You see the difficulty?"

"Quite."

"AND then there was another thing. It comes back to me now as I think it over. There was some evidence that, just at the time the lion roared and the woman screamed, a man began shouting in terror."

"This man Ronder, no doubt."

"Well, if his skull was smashed in you would hardly expect to hear from him again. There were at least two witnesses who spoke of the cries of a man being mingled with those of a woman."

"I should think the whole camp was crying out by then. As to the other points, I think I could suggest a solution."

"I should be glad to consider it."

"The two were together, ten yards from the cage, when the lion got loose. The man turned and was struck down. The woman conceived the idea of getting into the cage and shutting the door. It was her only refuge. She made for it, and just as she reached it the beast bounded after her and knocked her over. She was angry with her husband for having encouraged the beast's rage by turning. If they had faced it, they might have cowed it. Hence her cries of 'Coward!'"

"Brilliant, Watson! Only one flaw in your diamond."

"What is the flaw, Holmes?"

"If they were both ten paces from the cage, how came the beast to get loose?"

"Is it possible that they had some enemy who loosed it?"

"And why should it attack them savagely when it was in the habit of playing with them, and doing tricks with them inside the cage?"

"Possibly the same enemy had done something to enrage it."

Holmes looked thoughtful and remained in silence for some moments.

"Well, Watson, there is this to be said for your theory. Ronder was a man of many enemies. Edmunds told me that in his cups he was horrible. A huge bully of a man, he cursed and slashed at everyone who came in his way. I expect those cries about a monster, of which our visitor has spoken, were nocturnal reminiscences of the dear departed. However, our speculations are futile until we have all the facts. There is a cold partridge on the sideboard, Watson, and a bottle of Montrachet. Let us renew our energies before we make a fresh call upon them."

WHEN our hansom deposited us at the house of Mrs. Merrilow, we found that plump lady blocking up the open door of her humble but retired abode. It was very clear that her chief preoccupation was lest she should lose a valuable lodger, and she implored us, before showing us up, to say and do nothing which could lead to so undesirable an end. Then, having reassured her, we followed her up the straight, badly-carpeted staircase, and were shown into the room of the mysterious lodger.

It was a close, musty, ill-ventilated place, as might be expected, since its inmate seldom left it. From keeping beasts in a cage, the woman seemed, by some retribution of Fate, to have become herself a beast in a cage. She sat now in a broken arm-chair in the shadowy corner of the room. Long years of inaction had coarsened the lines of her figure, but at some period it must have been beautiful, and was still full and voluptuous. A thick dark veil

Holmes sat upon the floor like some

covered her face, but it was cut off close at her upper lip, and disclosed a perfectly-shaped mouth and a delicately-rounded chin. I could well conceive that she had indeed been a very remarkable woman. Her voice, too, was well-modulated and pleasing.

"My name is not unfamiliar to you, Mr. Holmes," said she. "I thought that it would bring you."

"That is so, madam, though I do not know how you are aware that I was interested in your case."

"I learned it when I had recovered my health, and was examined by Mr. Edmunds, the County detective. I fear I lied to him. Perhaps it would have been wiser had I told the truth."

"It is usually wiser to tell the truth. But why did you lie to him?"

"Because the fate of someone else depended upon it. I know that he was a very worthless being, and yet I would not have his destruction upon my conscience. We had been so close — so close!"

"But has this impediment been removed?"

"Yes, sir. The person that I allude to is dead."

strange Buddha, with crossed legs, the books all round him, and one open upon his knees.

"Then why should you not now tell the police anything you know?"

"Because there is another person to be considered. That other person is myself. I could not stand the scandal and publicity which would come from a police examination. I have not long to live, but I wish to die undisturbed. And yet I wanted to find one man of judgment to whom I could tell my terrible story, so that when I am gone all might be understood."

"You compliment me, madam. At the same time, I am a responsible person. I do not promise you that when you have spoken I may not myself think it my duty to refer the case to the police."

"I think not, Mr. Holmes. I know your character and methods too well, for I have followed your work for some years. Reading is the only pleasure which Fate has left me, and I miss little which passes in the world. But in any case I will take my chance of the use which you may make of my tragedy. It will ease my mind to tell it."

"My friend and I would be glad to hear it."

THE woman rose and took from a drawer the photograph of a man. He was clearly a professional acrobat, a man of magnificent physique, taken with his huge arms folded across his swollen chest, and a smile breaking from under his heavy moustache—the self-satisfied smile of the man of many conquests.

"That is Leonardo," she said.

"Leonardo, the strong man, who gave evidence?"

"The same. And this—this is my husband."

It was a dreadful face—a human pig, or rather a human wild boar, for it was formidable in its bestiality. One could imagine that vile mouth champing and foaming in its rage, and one could conceive those small, vicious eyes darting pure malignancy as they looked forth upon the world. Ruffian, bully, beast—it was all written on that heavy-jowled face.

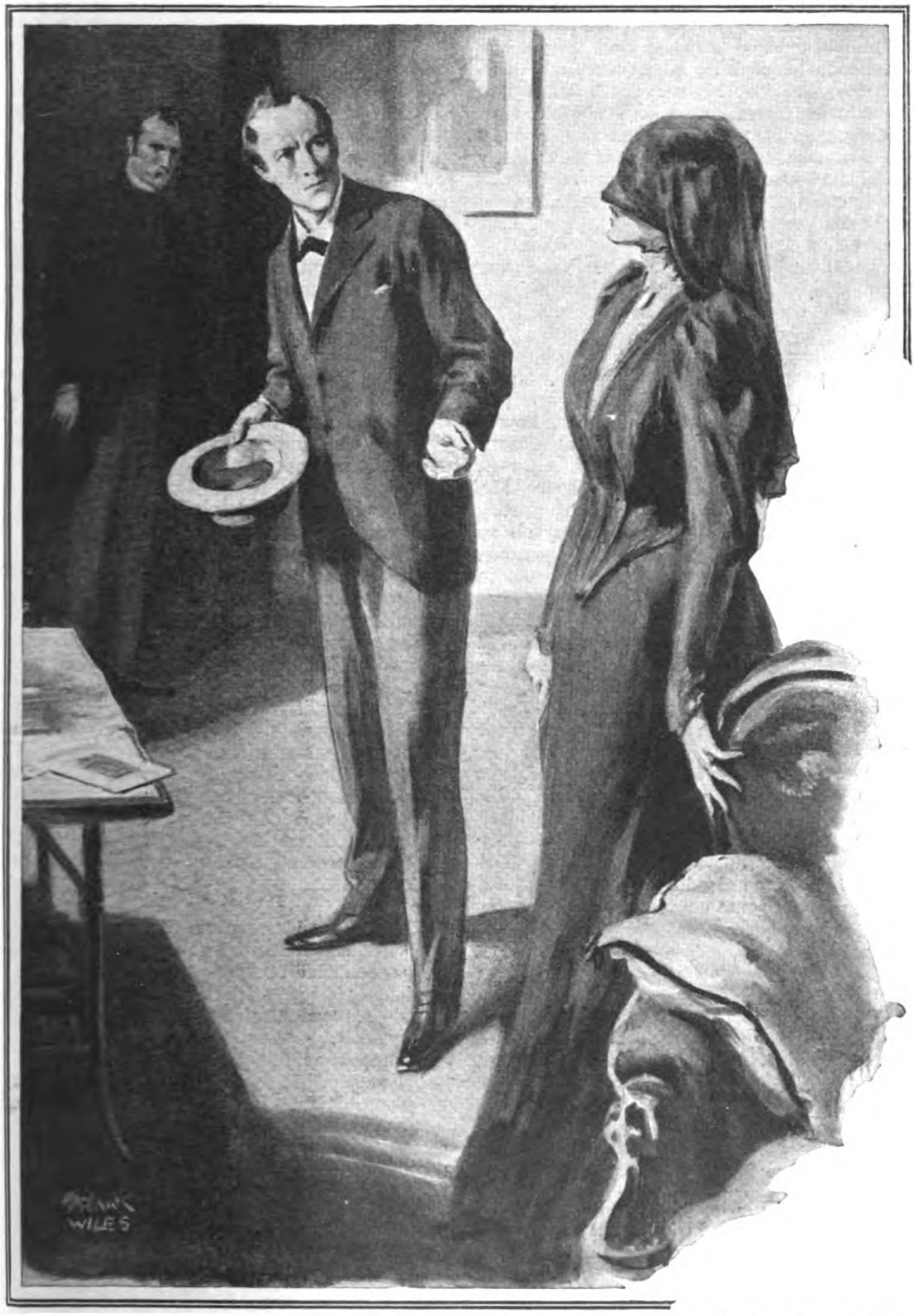
"Those two pictures will help you, gentlemen, to understand the story. I was a poor circus girl brought up on the sawdust, and doing springs through the hoop before I was ten. When I became a woman this man loved me, if such lust as his can be called love, and in an evil moment I became his wife. From that day I was in hell, and he the devil who tormented me. There was no one in the show who did not know of his treatment. He deserted me for others. He tied me down and lashed me with his riding whip when I complained. They all pitied me and they all loathed him, but what could they do? They feared him, one and all. For he was terrible at all times, and murderous when he was drunk. Again and again he was had for assault, and for cruelty to the beasts, but he had plenty of money, and the fines were nothing to him. The best men all left us, and the show began to go downhill. It was only Leonardo and I who kept it up—with little Jimmy Griggs the clown. Poor devil, he had not much to be funny about, but he did what he could to hold things together.

"Then Leonardo came more and more into my life. You see what he was like. I know now the poor spirit that was hidden in that splendid body, but compared to my husband he seemed like the Angel Gabriel. He pitied me and helped me, till at last our intimacy turned to love—deep, deep, passionate love, such love as I had dreamed of, but never hoped to feel. My husband suspected it, but I think that he was a coward as well as a bully, and that Leonardo was the one man that he was afraid of. He took revenge in his own way by torturing me more than ever. One night my cries brought Leonardo to the door of our van. We were near tragedy that night, and soon my lover and I understood that it could not be avoided. My husband was not fit to live. We planned that he should die.

"Leonardo had a clever, scheming brain. It was he who planned it. I do not say that to blame him, for I was ready to go with him every inch of the way. But I should never have had the wit to think of such a plan. We made a club—Leonardo made it—and in the leaden head he fastened five long steel nails, the points outwards, with just such a spread as the lion's paw. This was to give my husband his death-blow, and yet to leave the evidence that it was the lion which we would loose who had done the deed.

"IT was a pitch-dark night when my husband and I went down, as was our custom, to feed the beast. We carried with us the raw meat in a zinc pail. Leonardo was waiting at the corner of the big van which we should have to pass before we reached the cage. He was too slow, and we walked past him before he could strike, but he followed us on tiptoe and I heard the crash as the club smashed my husband's skull. My heart leaped with joy at the sound. I sprang forward, and I undid the catch which held the door of the great lion's cage.

"And then the terrible thing happened. You may have heard how quick these creatures are to scent human blood, and how it excites them. Some strange instinct had told the creature in one instant that a human being had been slain. As I slipped



There was something in the woman's voice which arrested Holmes's attention. He turned swiftly upon her.

"Your life is not your own," he said. "Keep your hands off it."

the bars it bounded out, and was on me in an instant. Leonardo could have saved me. If he had rushed forward and struck the beast with his club he might have cowed it. But the man lost his nerve. I heard him shout in his terror, and then I saw him turn and fly. At the same instant the teeth of the lion met in my face. Its hot, filthy breath had already poisoned me, and I was hardly conscious of pain. With the palms of my hands I tried to push the great steaming, blood-stained jaws away from me, and I screamed for help. I was conscious that the camp was stirring, and then dimly I remember a group of men, Leonardo, Griggs, and others, dragging me from under the creature's paws. That was my last memory, Mr. Holmes, for many a weary month. When I came to myself, and saw myself in the mirror, I cursed that lion—oh, how I cursed him!—not because he had torn away my beauty, but because he had not torn away my life. I had but one desire, Mr. Holmes, and I had enough money to gratify it. It was that I should cover myself so that my poor face should be seen by none, and that I should dwell where none whom I had ever known should find me. That was all that was left to me to do—and that is what I have done. A poor wounded beast that has crawled into its hole to die—that is the end of Eugenia Ronder."

WE sat in silence for some time after the unhappy woman had told her story. Then Holmes stretched out his long arm and patted her hand with such a show of sympathy as I had seldom known him to exhibit.

"Poor girl!" he said. "Poor girl! The ways of Fate are indeed hard to understand. If there is not some compensation hereafter then the world is a cruel jest. But what of this man Leonardo?"

"I never saw him or heard from him again. Perhaps I have been wrong to feel so bitterly against him. He might as soon have loved one of the freaks whom we carried round the country as the thing which the lion had left. But a woman's love is not so easily set aside. He had left me under the beast's claws, he had deserted me in my need, and yet I could not bring myself to give him to the gallows. For myself, I cared nothing what became of me. What could be more dreadful than my actual life? But I stood between Leonardo and his fate."

"And he is dead?"

"He was drowned last month when bathing near Margate. I saw his death in the paper."

"And what did he do with this five-clawed club, which is the most singular and ingenious part of all your story?"

"I cannot tell, Mr. Holmes. There is a chalk pit by the camp, with a deep green pool at the base of it. Perhaps in the depths of that pool——"

"Well, well, it is of little consequence now. The case is closed."

"Yes," said the woman, "the case is closed."

We had risen to go, but there was something in the woman's voice which arrested Holmes's attention. He turned swiftly upon her.

"Your life is not your own," he said. "Keep your hands off it."

"What use is it to anyone?"

"How can you tell? The example of patient suffering is in itself the most precious of all lessons to an impatient world."

The woman's answer was a terrible one. She raised her veil and stepped forward into the light.

"I wonder if you would bear it," she said.

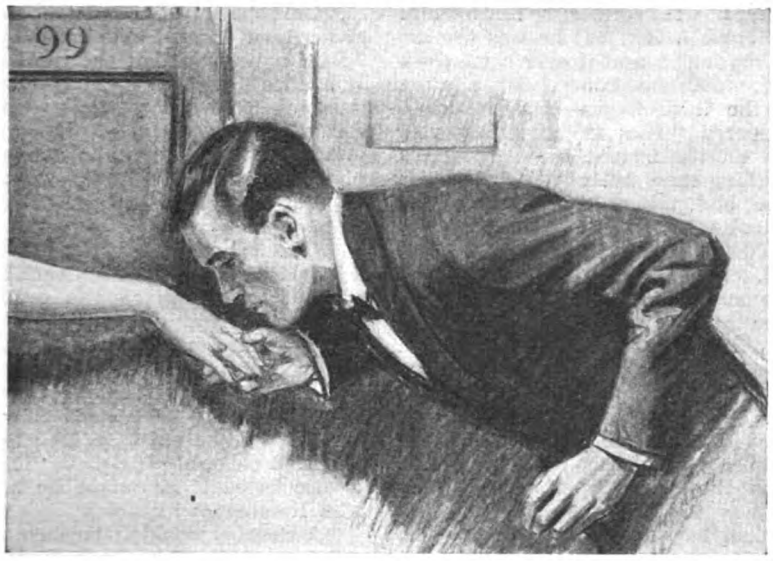
It was horrible. No words can describe the framework of a face when the face itself is gone. Two living and beautiful brown eyes looking sadly out from that grisly ruin did but make the view more awful. Holmes held up his hand in a gesture of pity and protest, and together we left the room.

TWO days later, when I called upon my friend, he pointed with some pride to a small blue bottle upon his mantelpiece. I picked it up. There was a red poison label. A pleasant almondy odour rose when I opened it.

"Prussic acid?" said I.

"Exactly. It came by post. 'I send you my temptation. I will follow your advice.' That was the message. I think, Watson, we can guess the name of the brave woman who sent it."

The next story in this series will be "The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place."



THE RING WITH THE GREEN STONE

By

J. J. BELL

Illustrated by
P. B. HICKLING

IT was precisely eleven p.m., ship's time, when Frank Leslie, his head full of business figures, turned into the alley which, he thought, led to his cabin. The night was calm, the first-class cabins were well removed from the old *Astrea's* machinery, and you could have told with your eyes shut that Frank had a limp, though you would scarcely have noticed it with your eyes open. Your ears would further have informed you that Frank was not musical, otherwise he would have refrained from whistling, even softly, "I Want to be Happy," in the dreariest and flattest of tones. In extenuation it should be explained that Frank whistled only when his brain was very busy, and when he was quite unaware of committing the crime. And it may be added that Frank might not on this occasion have whistled "I Want to be Happy." had he not, a few minutes earlier and more or less unconsciously, heard an elderly gentleman, who was pacing the deck, also with a limp, whistle the same simple yet seductive melody in a manner almost as absent-minded as his own.

All of which is recorded by way of prologue to the sudden and, indeed, startling happening in the hitherto rather unromantic career of a young man who, by strict attention to business, had attained to a fairly high position in the commercial department of Floyds, Limited, the noted engineering contractors.

The near sound of a handle being turned caused Frank to pause in his stride, as well as in his whistling. The door immediately on his right was drawn inwards a few inches, a hand came round its edge, followed by an arm, naked and lovely, and a girlish voice said softly, tenderly:—

"Good night, dear."

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Now Frank was neither a sentimental nor a humorous fellow, but he was a man, and he was young; and if ever a hand—a right hand, small and dainty, with a green stone on the third finger—if ever such a hand whispered "Kiss me!" it was this one. And on the instant business figures and everything sane and practical flew out of his head, and, taking a step forward, he stooped, took the finger-tips in his own, and pressed his lips warmly to the cool, sweet skin.

Whereupon, with a screech, the hand disappeared, and the door was slammed in his face.

Frank did not smile. It had been a moment of real emotion; his honest face was a trifle pale, his brow slightly moist. And then he reddened, feeling, somehow, ashamed of himself. He was about to pass on when his glance was caught by the number on the door—"99." Good heavens, he was in the wrong alley! Less leisurely than he had entered he made his way out. Presently, in the privacy of his cabin—there were comparatively few passengers on board, and he had the room to himself—he called himself a silly ass, took from a locked attaché-case a notebook labelled "Specification," and fell to studying the pages, as one who memorizes facts and figures. But not for long was his attention thus held, and with a movement of irritation he threw the book on the sofa and took out his cigarette-case.

Something had happened to him which seemed to have thrown his mental mechanism out of gear. It was perfectly absurd, but the small, dainty hand with the green jewel was still before his eyes, its faint fragrance still in his nostrils. It was idiotic, since not for years had he given a single serious thought to the other sex.

THE owner of the pretty hand, having slammed the door, sank down on her berth, as pink and angry as a nice girl could be.

"What on earth is the matter, Esther?" exclaimed the middle-aged lady on the berth opposite.

"It wasn't Daddy."

"What!" The middle-aged lady sat erect. "Are you telling me that someone, not your father, kissed your hand just now?"

"Yes—some pig, without a moustache! Oh!" Esther jumped up. "I must wash it off at once! Ugh! You can't imagine how dreadful I feel, Auntie!" She turned on the water and removed her ring, an antique set with a green garnet. "Plenty of soap—*and* a nailbrush—oo!—it was a horrid feeling! Wow, that's better! Could you have imagined there was such a pig in the world? Could you, Auntie?"

"Um!" said Miss Remington, glancing at her own hand—quite a dainty one, too. "Isn't it possible that the word 'pig' may be a little too severe? It was, of course, a most impertinent act, but as we don't know who the guilty person——"

"It doesn't matter who did it—it was a piggish thing to do! And the man who——"

"But we don't even know that it was a man——"

"*I* know! Bristly! Oo! He must be a horrid creature, and, oh, such a sneak!" said Esther, dropping the towel and replacing the ring.

"Why 'sneak'?"

"Because he whistled Daddy's tune and, which is far more sneaky, copied Daddy's limp. He must have spied on Daddy and learned that he came to his cabin exactly at eleven o'clock."

"Looks as if he might be a steward," Miss Remington remarked.

"A steward wouldn't be such a fool!"

"Any man might be a fool," said the other dryly, "when a girl puts out a nice, clean hand, with a nicely-shaped arm attached, and as good as invites a kiss."

"I didn't!"

"Well, your action spoke louder than words, and, anyway, you said 'Good night, dear!'"

"You're extremely nasty, Auntie. From my point of view it's nothing to be funny about."

"I hope I don't appear amused," Miss Remington returned mildly. "On the contrary, I appreciate your feelings, Esther; but I may repeat what I said last night and the night before—namely, that in putting out your hand for your father to kiss——"

"I suppose you think it silly and childish ——"

"That is not my point. But if you *will* do it, you must accept the risks."

"I've always done it, since Daddy and I first travelled together. We've always had cabins next door, or opposite, and he likes my doing it. And his whistle tells me that the coast is clear. If anyone was about, he wouldn't whistle. Besides, in the present case his steward told him we had this passage all to ourselves."

"Why doesn't your father knock instead of whistling?"

"Just because he doesn't. We've got into the habit of doing as we are doing. That's all—and there he is now!" Esther moved over to the door.

Miss Remington put out a detaining hand.

"You can't be sure that it isn't the—h'm—pig back again."

"Oh, horror!" sighed Esther, and stood listening till the quiet, discreet whistling ceased.

Outside an elderly gentleman looked at his watch, wagged his head self-reproachfully, and turned disconsolately to the door opposite. Such is the force of habit that he did not think of tapping and saying "Good night, Esther."

As his door closed Esther sighed again and sank once more upon the berth, where she sat silent, gazing at her right hand.

"By the way," said Miss Remington, abruptly, "if I were you, Esther, I should not wear that ring while you are on board."

The girl looked up quickly. "You think he might recognize it?"

"I shouldn't give him the chance."

"But it would be an easy enough matter for him, if he's curious, to learn who occupies this cabin."

"True." The spinster's smile was a trifle sardonic. "If you want to punish him, whoever he is, let me wear the ring for the present."

"Auntie!" exclaimed Esther. "But you aren't so——" She stopped short.

"I know I'm not so awful as all that," Miss Remington said, pleasantly. "Still, I'll be awful enough if he happens to be a young man with romantic tendencies." She laughed. "Well, what about it? It might be rather fun."

"Why, so it might," allowed Esther, her grey eyes dancing, "if you wouldn't really mind. But what if he's not a *young* man?"

"Um! I'll take the risk of that. And if, to-morrow, you see a male face fall almost to the deck, you'll know that your pig has been punished."

"It doesn't seem half enough punishment," Esther observed, slipping off the ring and handing it across.

"Once you have caught your pig, means may be found for roasting him to your complete satisfaction," returned Miss Remington, slipping on the ring. "And now kindly let me get all the beauty sleep I can!"

"I wonder if I ought to tell Daddy?" sighed Esther.

"Do so, by all means, if you want the ship set on fire."

"Yes, he would be frightfully angry, and it might keep him from enjoying the voyage. I'll just have to pretend that I fell asleep early to-night. But what about to-morrow night?"

"Ask him to knock in future. You can say that the present method makes me nervous. Ha, ha!" said Miss Remington, who would not have turned a hair, as the saying is, at an earthquake. "Good night!"

IT was, at all events, a better night for Esther than for the young man whose cabin was not in her alley. The more he thought of it—not that he desired to think of it; at least, so he told himself—the more emphatically he called himself a silly ass. Nay, he was worse than that, for he had, to judge from her screech, given a lady a nasty scare, which, as a decent-minded young man, he honestly regretted.

At the same time he could not help wondering for whom the pretty hand and the soft "Good night, dear," had been intended. Of course, it might have been intended for almost any person, from a grandfather to a girl friend. Girls in their endearments had no sense of proportion. But such speculations were merely fatuous, he impatiently told himself—and continued to speculate, not only on the hand, but on what might be found at the other end, so to speak, of the lovely arm.

Assuring himself that, in all probability, the lovely arm was closely connected with a scraggy neck and unattractive countenance—not that it mattered, anyway—he turned over and once more composed himself for slumber, only to start considering what, if anything, he should do, supposing that on the morrow he met a lady with a green stone on her right hand. When he did at last fall asleep, it was in the resolve to forget, or at least to ignore, the foolish incident and confine his thoughts to the weighty business which had made him a passenger on the *Astrea*.

THE *Astrea*, now three days out, was bound for certain Mediterranean ports, the most distant being Alexandria. Frank Leslie's objective was Cairo, where he hoped to do a fine stroke of business for his employers, after which he expected to catch the *Astrea* for the homeward voyage. In view of the importance of the business, Frank may seem to have chosen a leisurely route, but by the *Astrea* he would reach his destination just at the right time, and the managing director of Floyds, Limited, had shown appreciation of his past services by arranging that the trip should partake of a holiday.

The *Astrea* was, as liners go, an old-fashioned vessel—a reserve ship—and was taking the sailing of one of the company's fleet, the *Urania*, now in dry dock after a collision. A good many of the people who had booked pleasure passages on the *Urania* had elected to wait for the sailing of the next available first-class vessel; hence the small complement of passengers carried by the *Astrea*.

Still, they seemed quite a crowd to Frank when he came on deck, after a rather late breakfast, interested for the first time in his fellow-travellers. Women predominated, and there were at least a dozen girls whose hands he might, for all he could tell, have kissed at eleven o'clock the previous night.

One notes here that Frank, despite all resolves in the direction of austerity and reprobation of his own folly, began with "girls." It was, of course, open to him to go straight to the purser's office and scan the list of passengers; and the idea of doing so certainly occurred to him; but somehow it jarred on his sensibility and was promptly dismissed. Rightly or wrongly, Frank felt that it would not be playing the game.

As it happened, however, he was in the vicinity of the purser's office when a tall elderly man, with a grey moustache and a slight limp, came out and, after a shrewd glance, approached and gave him a courteous "Good morning." Frank was not really an unsociable fellow, and his mind being decidedly off business just then, he reciprocated the greeting amicably enough. Conversation ensued, the elderly man proffered a cigar, and a walk round the deck followed. The elderly man, finding he had left his card-case in his cabin, mentioned that his name was Alfred Remington, and Frank returned the courtesy in the same informal way.

The *Astrea* had now left the cold weather behind, and most of her passengers were lounging on deck. At the end of nearly an hour's promenade Mr. Alfred Remington said:—

"I should like, Mr. Leslie, to present you to my sister and daughter, who are making this little holiday trip with me."

"I should be delighted," Frank replied, more politely than truthfully. He was not anxious to know many people on board, and the possibility of Mr. Remington's daughter being the lady whose hand he had kissed, while remote, was not one for which he felt in any degree prepared.

At the same moment Esther, in a deck-chair, let fall a book and exclaimed, "Oh, goodness!" in so shocked a voice that her companion started from a pleasant nap to inquire urgently what ailed her.

"That man with Daddy—look!—he's got a little limp just the same as Daddy—and oh, mercy!—I believe Daddy's bringing him here!"

"Well, what about it?" said Miss Remington, calmly, and began to hum "I Want to be Happy."

"Oh, be quiet!" whispered Esther. "What if he is the pig?"

"I expect we shall know for certain quite soon," replied the spinster, smiling at the green stone on her finger. "I trust I'm looking my awfullest! Poor, poor young man!" Miss Remington *was* plain, though not without charm.

"I know he richly deserves it," began the girl, "but——"

"Thank you, my dear!"

"Oh, Auntie, don't make fun. But don't you think you ought to wait awhile before you——"

"The sooner we know the truth, the better. Besides, I want to learn whether—if guilty—he's a gentlemanly pig, or only a pigly gentleman. Buck up, Esther! Your father is certainly bringing him here. For Heaven's sake don't look as if you wished he would kiss your hand again!"

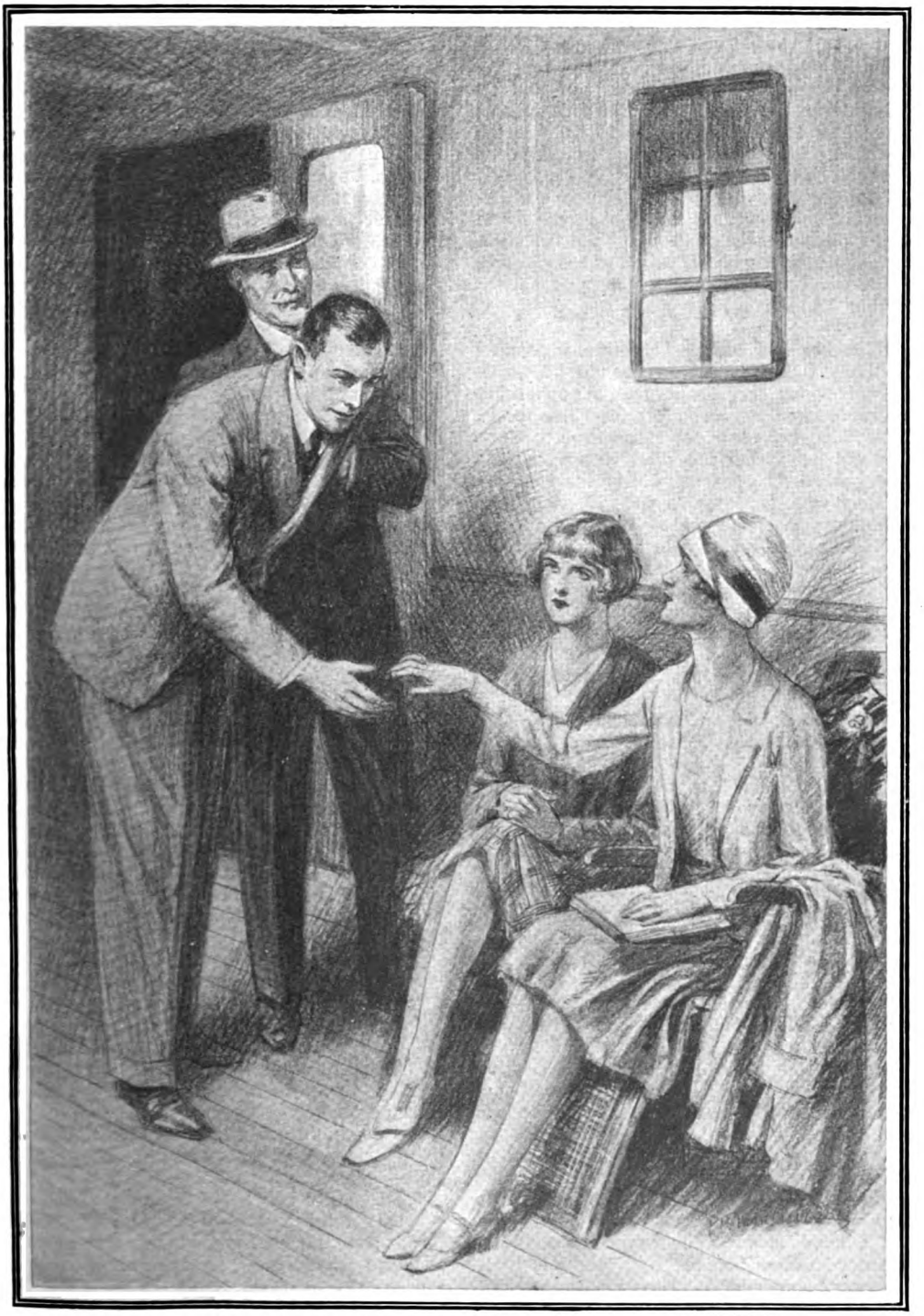
"How dare you!" cried Esther, and sat up, looking the proudest, coldest thing in the world.

She thawed sufficiently to accept her father's introduction of the young man with a small smile and a formal inclination, which was as much, probably, as Frank expected. Miss Remington, however, with a cordial "How d'ye do?" extended her hand, palm downwards.

There could be no doubting the young man's guilt. The strongest sea-air coupled with the most abject native bashfulness could not have provided excuse for his colour then. Besides, he actually staggered. Yet in the same moment he pulled himself together and took the proffered hand. Nay, more, he bowed over it, saying very quietly, yet distinctly enough for the spinster's hearing, "I beg your pardon." Whereupon she decided that, in spite of last night, he was a "gentlemanly pig."

Mr. Alfred Remington had already signed to the deck-steward, and chairs were speedily forthcoming. Seeing that he could not very well end matters by the simple expedient of making another bow and walking away, Frank was glad enough to sit down. And in the hour that followed he was not made to suffer too severely. Miss Remington was gracious, Mr. Remington genial and amusing, and if Esther said little, her manner might have been more distant. Possibly she was only biding her time; perhaps she was just a little sorry for him. She could hardly have explained her own feelings at the moment. But she had not pardoned him—she was very sure of that!

DURING the next few days their meetings were fairly frequent, as they were bound to be, unless Frank had shut himself up in his cabin, which he sometimes thought of doing, but never did. Mr. Remington was evidently disposed to be friendly, and Miss Remington's welcome seemed always sincere and kindly. The girl was cool, and he guessed that she knew of his folly, for he was now aware that both ladies had the same cabin, and regarded him as something of a "bounder." That thought rankled and might well have restrained him from his new acquaintances, had he not cherished the hope of, somehow and some day, getting her



He took the proffered hand and bowed over it. Whereupon she decided, in spite of last night, that he was a "gentlemanly pig."

to believe that the thing had been done involuntarily, when his wits were not at home.

One thing puzzled him. Who was the person for whom Miss Remington had so affectionate a regard? Except in a formal way Miss Remington spoke to no one on board, and he had witnessed no passages between her and her brother which could, in the slightest degree, be termed "sentimental." However, as the days—some spent on shore—slipped past, the question dropped from his mind, which was beginning to be occupied, and not too happily so, by Esther herself.

IF Esther was biding her time, it seemed likely that the revenge would be worth waiting for. But Esther read her own mind no more clearly than before, and this might have been her state for some time to come had not her father provided, in a way most unexpected, the necessary illumination.

They were standing at the rail, alone, one afternoon, when he said:—

"Can't you be a little nicer, Esther, to Mr. Leslie?"

"Why"—in astonishment—"I think I have been very nice indeed!"

"Perhaps I ought to have said 'more friendly.'"

"H'm! I'm afraid," she said slowly, "I'm not interested enough for that."

"But what if *I* am interested?"

She glanced up. "How do you mean, Daddy?"

"Well, I like him as a young man." Remington paused.

His daughter's grey eyes looked mildly amused. "Are you suggesting that I should fall in love with him?"

"That might suit me later on," he answered, with a dry smile. "On the other hand, it might not. You see, while I like him now, I can't promise that I shall like him a few days hence."

"You are not in the habit of being—a—cryptic, Daddy. That's the word, isn't it? Please tell me just what you mean."

Remington glanced right and left. No passenger was near, yet he lowered his voice to say: "I mean that I shall not like Mr. Leslie if he gets in my way, and I want you to keep him out of it." He puffed at his cigar, and continued: "I may not have told you that I have a little business to do in Cairo——"

"I have never known you to make a journey unless there was some 'little business' somewhere. But, please, go on."

"At Cairo," he proceeded, "I hope to secure a most important contract. As you know, this trip was rather hurriedly arranged; and it was hurriedly arranged because of a hint to the effect that the people in Cairo were hesitating between my firm and one other firm—Floyds, Limited. An hour with the people in Cairo would, I felt certain, cause a decision in our favour. But the thing had to be done quietly. Business people watch each other nowadays. I might have waited and gone to Cairo express, but it seemed less obvious to make it appear a holiday trip for us all. This is the first time I've talked business with you, Esther, and if I don't make it clear——"

"It's quite clear so far," she put in; "and I guess that you are going to tell me that Mr. Leslie comes from Floyds, on the same errand as yours."

"Good for you, my girl!"

"And I don't think much of Mr. Leslie for giving his affairs away——"

"Ah, but wait a minute, Esther! Mr. Leslie has given nothing away. He is not, I assure you, a fool. A fool would not hold the position he has gained with Floyds, Limited, and I may as well tell you that, six months ago, he cut my firm out of a contract nearly as good as the Cairo one. I couldn't help admiring him then, but I'm not going to have it happen again!"

"Then you met him six months ago! I thought you had just picked him up on board."

"I remembered his name from six months ago, when I saw it on the *Astrea's* passenger list; but I saw him for the first time the other day. To make certain I radioed my firm, asking them to find out, by hook or by crook, whether Floyd's Mr. Leslie was on the *Astrea*, and on the fourth morning of the trip I got a reply in the affirmative; whereupon I proceeded to make his acquaintance."

With a slight wrinkling of dark brows Esther regarded her father. "Does he know that you know who he is?" she asked.

"Certainly not!"

"But he must know who *you* are!"

"Why?"

"Because he knows your name."

"Only part of it. I introduced myself as Alfred Remington. You must have noticed that he addresses me as 'Mr. Remington.'"

"Yes—but I could quite understand your introducing yourself without the 'Sir.' Still——" She halted.

"Still what?"

"Oh, nothing, Daddy." Her gaze was intent on the rushing water. "I see," she said presently. "Naturally, since you are known everywhere as 'Sir John,' he would not suspect anything. Well, that does give you an advantage, doesn't it? Has he told you nothing about his business?"

"I've already mentioned that he is not

a fool," said Remington, a trifle testily, "and I hope I may say the same of myself. If he had touched ever so lightly on anything connected with engineering, I should not have encouraged him, lest I gave myself away in turn. That's clear enough, isn't it?"

She nodded. "Then your idea," she said slowly, "is to get to Cairo before he does?"

"That's it! He understands that ours is a holiday, pure and simple, taken mainly for the sea-voyage, and that, while the ship is lying for a few days at Alexandria, we intend to see what we can of Egypt."

"Ye-es. But if he's as keen on business as you've given me to understand, he won't lose any time in getting to Cairo."

"He won't lose a moment—unless he is somehow prevented, or detained." Remington's look at his daughter was less direct than usual. "It need only be for a matter of hours," he added.

"And," said the girl, her gaze still on the water, "you want me to—to do something that will lead to his being detained. Is that it?"

"Exactly! You have quick wits, Esther."

A moment passed, and she said: "You are really and honestly afraid that, if he gets there before you, he will secure the contract for his firm?"

"That is so. I'm not taking chances. I happen to know that his French is perfect, while mine, as you are aware, is very so-so. That may seem a trifle, but where the balance is even, a trifle makes all the difference. I shouldn't care so much if Floyds had not beaten us six months ago. But if I don't pull off this business, Esther, I'll feel I'm becoming an old man."

"That would be absurd, Daddy," she said quickly, warmly. "Of course you must pull it off. Only——" She halted again.

"Yes?"

"I don't want to hurt you, but isn't business rather—a—beastly sometimes?"

"It's a game, my girl, but you can't always play it in the open, like cricket. You've got to take an advantage when it's offered. In this case, however, I don't suppose a little set-back will do our young friend any serious damage—may even be good for him."

"Shouldn't wonder," said Esther, glancing at her right hand, and trying to recall how angry she had been when the green stone was last on it.

"Mind you," said her father, "I like Leslie. In fact, I'd be mighty glad to have him as my lieutenant——"

"Why not make him an offer?".

"I hope I know an honest man. No, no! It's because I can't be sure of beating him myself that I appeal to you. Make it as pleasant for him as you can. It's obvious that he wants to be friendly. You have three clear days before we reach Alexandria. I was thinking that for the first morning there the four of us might plan some excursion, and at the last moment I'd find myself unable to go. However, something brighter may occur to you. Will you think it over?"

"Yes; I'll think it over."

"Good!" He tossed the butt of the cigar over the rail and took a survey of the deck. "I see him with your aunt over there. Great pals, these two! Well, shall we join them?"

"I'll follow you presently," said Esther.

Left to herself, she sighed. Since leaving school she had been her father's comrade on all his journeys, convinced from day to day that he was the frankest, most considerate, most generous-hearted man in the whole world. And now, of a sudden, he had given her a glimpse of his business side; and it had hurt. Also he had shown her a way to punish a presumptuous young man; and she was not absolutely certain she wanted to punish him—at all events, too severely. But the presumptuous young man's success in this business meant nothing to her, whereas her father's meant much, and though the thought of her father's proposed conspiracy made her wince, there could be no question of her loyalty where he was concerned.

IN the course of the next three days a new world was opened to Frank Leslie. Not that the girl threw herself at him; she was very far from being what is termed "affable"; but the chill had gone from her manner, and she appeared readier to join in the talk. Miss Remington, who had taken a decided fancy to Frank, was secretly amused, and required no hint from her brother to leave the young people alone. And being left alone, the young people forgot minor formalities, and acquaintance quickened. More than once it occurred to Remington, strolling past the pair, that his daughter was a wonderful little actress; and that the young man was tottering on the verge, if he had not actually fallen in.

On the third night, after dinner, on deck, Esther put a direct question.

"Are you making a stay in Egypt, Mr. Leslie?"

"No; I hope to return on this ship. I have some business to do in Cairo, but shall attend to it the first thing, so that I may see a few of the sights afterwards. Your father tells me that you are all going home on the *Astrea*, too."

"Yes. . . . Your business in Cairo—will it take long?"

"I don't think so; at least I hope not, though it means so much to me that I'd readily give it all the available time, and let the sights take care of themselves." He smiled reflectively. "In fact, Miss Remington, if the Cairo business doesn't come off, I sha'n't enjoy the voyage home one little bit. So please wish me luck."

If he had deliberately schemed it, he could not have cornered her more effectually. In the darkness her face burned with the sudden shame of it all. The thing was too horribly mean. She would not—could not—carry on. It was not fair of her father to use her like this. Her father ought to be above doing business by such methods. And yet he was her father, the best ever, and was depending on her help. What was she to say to this man at her side? To wish him luck would be sheer hypocrisy. To answer him nothing would surely, apart from hurting him, set him wondering.

All these thoughts were of an instant. She must say something.

"Whatever luck you may have in Cairo," she said, slowly, "I wish you a happy homeward voyage."

"Thank you. That is even more than I asked, though more than can be possible," he returned, quietly. "May I hope that it implies something I've wanted to know very badly?"

"What is that, Mr. Leslie?"

"That you have forgiven me."

"Forgiven you?"

"Miss Remington, your aunt, has forgiven me."

"Oh, that! Yes, I think I have forgiven—and I'd like it forgotten."

"You are generous."

They had come into the lights of the deck-houses, and his eyes were on her profile.

"Are you tired?" he abruptly asked. "Would you like to go to the lounge, or——"

"Yes; I'm a bit tired. I think I'll slip off to bed. If you see my aunt, you might tell her I've gone, but——"

Mr. Remington came briskly from the smoke-room.

"Ah, there you are! Esther, have you told Mr. Leslie about our little excursion for the day after to-morrow?"

"No," she answered, faintly.

Mr. Remington was not dismayed. Genially he turned to Frank. "The purser tells me we shall get ashore on Tuesday morning, and I'm having a car to take us around. We hope you will join us, Mr. Leslie; we do, indeed."

"It's very kind of you, Mr. Remington," said Frank, "but——"

"Not at all. My daughter's idea—eh, Esther?"

For the life of her Esther could not have held up her head then. But Frank misread her embarrassment. The invitation to the excursion was another sign of her forgiveness, her generosity.

"I had planned to go right on to Cairo," he began.

"We're all going to Cairo on the following day, so why not go with us then?" put in Remington, offering his cigar-case. "Why not, Mr. Leslie?"

Frank laughed. "It's tremendously nice of you, and I don't see why, for once, I shouldn't put pleasure before business. Thank you, I'll be delighted."

"Business!" said Remington, gaily. "Leave business to old fellows like me!"

For an instant Esther was near to hating her father. Presently she excused herself, and went to her cabin, sick at heart. In the tricking of this young man she was as blameworthy as her parent—more so; for she had opened the way to making the trickery possible. She had not dreamed she could have been capable of so mean and shameful a thing.

HER aunt found her in bed, eyes closed. But the lashes flickered.

"Not asleep, dear?"

"Not quite, Auntie; but awfully sleepy." (What a fib!)

"Well, there's just one thing I want to ask you. Have you forgiven Mr. Frank Leslie?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because I've a dreadful feeling that lately you have been lifting him to the skies, with the intention of letting him drop; and, also, that I may have put the notion of such a revenge into your mind. Will you tell me that it isn't so, Esther? He's one of the best young fellows I——"

"I've forgiven him."

"Bless you! I'm *so* relieved." Miss Remington bent down and kissed her niece. "I shall sleep the better for knowing it, and so, I think, will you, dear. H'm! —perhaps you would like to wear your ring again?"

"Oh, never!" cried Esther, turning her back on the light.

"I've forgiven him," she told herself often in the course of that long night, "but if he knew the truth, would he ever forgive me?"

IT seems unnecessary to go into particulars. Enough to say that the trick worked, and that, with the aid of a falsehood and an aeroplane, the older man was enabled to steal a march on the younger, and in due

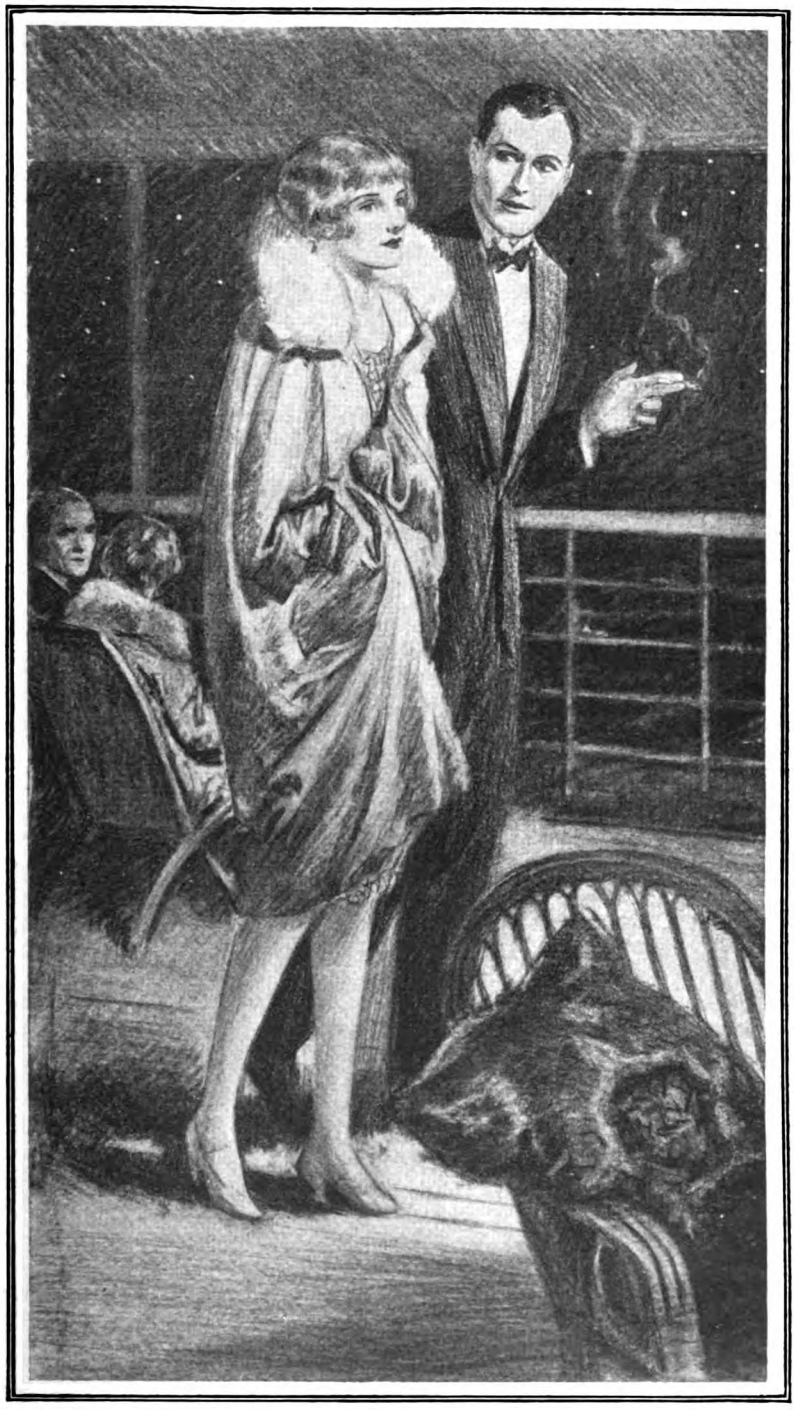
season to inform his daughter, to her secret sorrow, that she had helped him to victory. The contract was as good as confirmed; one official signature had still to be appended, but the completed document would be on its way to England that very night.

"I'm a bit sorry for Leslie," he said. "I'd do him a good turn if I could. But it doesn't do for the younger generation to win every time."

To which Esther answered nothing at all.

They parted with Frank Leslie in Cairo—he was sorry he could not accompany them on their little tour—and did not see him again till on board the *Astrea*, an hour before she started on her homeward voyage.

It seemed to Esther that he was taking his beating bravely. He did not say anything about his "luck" in Cairo, though she fancied he might be waiting for her sympathetic inquiry; but she could not even mention Cairo itself. She felt that she would always detest the word.



"Whatever luck you may have in Cairo," she said, "I wish you a happy homeward voyage."

Yet, once the homeward voyage was begun, she strove to keep the ugly part of the past in the background. She had wished Frank—as she now thought of him—a happy homeward voyage, and if he still desired her company, then it was the least she could do to make that company as cheerful as possible. One would imagine that Mr. Remington and his sister were animated by a similar aspiration, for the one was more genial and the latter more amiable than ever. However heavy the private burden of this young man might have been, it could scarcely have weighed all the time against the enjoyment of those Mediterranean days and nights.

ESTHER began to let herself drift. Why not take happiness and pleasure when they were there? The voyage, ere long, would reach its end. Afterwards—but she could not face the afterwards. Sooner or later Frank was bound to learn the truth, and despise her father—and herself. Crash! That was how the inevitable discovery of the trickery sounded in her thoughts. Yet all the time she prayed that Frank's failure would not prejudice him with Floyds, Limited, and impede him in his career.

The crash came sooner than she could have feared. The Mediterranean was astern, the *Astrea* was sailing into colder weather, and on that afternoon few passengers were on deck. Esther and Frank, after a smart promenade, were seated in a shelter, and Remington, looking genial as ever, was approaching.

Remington was within a few yards of them when he was overtaken by the assistant purser, holding out an envelope, which might well have been a bomb.

"Radio, Sir John!"

Sir John! At the words Esther gave a gasp and went white.

As for Remington, he opened his mouth, then—at his age, too!—went scarlet, snatched the envelope, turned abruptly, and made for below. Frank did not seem to notice him go. His eyes were on the girl.

"What is the matter, Miss Remington?" he asked, kindly. "Are you feeling ill?"

"Didn't you hear the purser?" she said, faintly.

"Yes. I hope the radio may not be bad news."

She made a little movement of helplessness. "Didn't you hear the purser call my father 'Sir John'?"

"I did—and it struck me as odd, for, of course, your father's name is——"

"My father's name is Sir John Alfred Remington," she said, feeling faint.

"Indeed?" He was looking a little bewildered.

"The chairman," she added, with an effort, "of Remington, Crozier, and Co."

At that he became alert. "But—why, Miss Remington, Sir John Remington, chairman of Remington, Crozier, and Co., was in Cairo on the day that your father wasn't well enough to come with us on the excursion we made at Alexandria! I happen to know, because in Cairo I had business with the people on whom Sir John had called a day ahead of me."

"You are speaking of my father," she said, sadly. "He *was* in Cairo a day ahead of you. He wasn't really ill. An aeroplane——"

She bowed her head, and sat waiting—waiting for what? His anger, his scorn, his reproaches? And he was silent.

"Please speak," she whispered, "and be done with it!"

"I'm trying to piece it together," he said, quietly. "As far as I've got, it's like this: Your father is Sir John Remington, chairman of a firm in opposition to the firm I serve. Both firms wanted this Cairo business. Both sent out representatives by, as it chanced, the same ship. Sir John discovered that I was on board, on the same scent, as it were, and, throwing me off the scent for a day, got there first. Is that about right, Miss Remington?"

"Yes. But it—it was a trick."

"Oh, well, we don't use much sentiment in business; and seeing that I put pleasure before business on that day, and didn't make for Cairo right away, I didn't deserve to be lucky."

"But"—with an upward glance—"don't you resent it frightfully?"

"I don't resent it at all. What is worrying me is the question of how I shall stand with your father when he learns—I can't imagine he knows yet—that my firm got the contract——"

"What? Impossible!" She sat erect, staring at him.

"Perhaps it ought to have been impossible, and so I admitted to myself when I got to Cairo and learned that Sir John had been before me," said Frank. "But, on the morning the *Astrea* arrived at Alexandria, I had sent a wire to a man in Cairo, whom I have entertained during his visits to London, asking him to use his influence—and he has a good deal—in my favour, and saying that I should arrive on the following day. Well, I understand that Sir John saw a document signed by all the necessary parties but one—my friend; and that, after Sir John had left, my friend talked the others over, and the contract went to my firm. Which,"

added Frank, "may seem a bit of a trick on my part."

"No, no," she said, quickly. "You went straight and deserved to win." She sighed. "So, after all, you've got the contract, and father—thinks he has!"

"That's what's worrying me. His friends at home must have heard by mail by this time. Possibly that radio——"

"Well, the sooner he knows the truth, the better!"

"Don't you sympathize with your father?"

"Oh, yes, always—except in this one thing. Still, I don't blame him as I blame myself."

"Blame yourself! For what?"

"Oh, you are blind!" she cried. "Can't you see the whole of the truth, or must I confess it in words?"

"Miss Remington," he said, gently, "I don't understand you at all. Even if your father *had* won, my resentment would have been only of the moment. I can take a beating without hating the other man."

"I'm not speaking of my father now, but of myself. Hasn't it occurred to you that I was helping him to trick you? Oh, it's a hateful thing to ask—but would you have waited from Cairo to make the excursion if—if I hadn't been there?"

IT was as though she had struck him. A dull red rose to his brow, and faded out. "I see," he said, slowly. "Yes, I'm afraid I've been pretty dense. But, somehow, I did not think a girl could, or would, do such a thing. And so you've been laughing at me all the time!"

"Laughing! I have been miserable! Can't you believe that?"

"It would take an effort, I'm afraid!" he said, bitterly.

"Mr. Leslie," she said, "you are hitting a girl who is down."

"God forbid!"

"But you are! I've shamed myself before you, and I've confessed—and perhaps I might have spared myself, seeing you did not even suspect me. But I had to tell you the truth."

"Why?" he asked, the harshness gone.

"I suppose I've got a—a conscience. Still, it does seem vain to have told you the truth, seeing that we sha'n't meet again, and seeing that you've won after all——"

"Won what?"

"The contract——"

"Oh, the contract!" He frowned. "Miss Remington, you were helping your father——"

"Don't blame him too much. I was willing—or almost willing—to help him——"

"You were?" His face clouded.

"At first! Afterwards——"

"You disliked me at first—I felt it—and it hurt—hurt deeply. Was it because of—of your aunt?"

Esther did not reply.

"May I not have all the truth? A little more won't kill me," he said, sorrowfully. "Do you know, Miss Remington, I've been such a silly ass that, in spite of your first dislike, I allowed myself to hope——"

"Please!" She was on her feet. "Yes, it will be better that you should know the whole truth—the whole deception. I sha'n't keep you waiting long."

HE watched her pass along the deserted deck and turn into a doorway. For a while he paced up and down, then leaned against the rail, watching the water.

There she rejoined him.

"I have seen my father," she said. "The radio was from London; the message was what you thought it might be."

"So he regards me as an enemy?"

"Only a business one," she answered with a frail smile. "I'm sure he's sorry—and he says it makes him feel old."

There was a pause, till abruptly she said:—

"If you please, may I have a cigarette?"

"Certainly!" A little surprised, he held out the case.

Slowly her hand went out and hovered over the white row. But she got no cigarette, for the case slipped from his fingers and was lost in a wave.

"Oh!" she cried, in distress. "What have I done?"

"Never mind!" he said, wildly, catching her fingers, staring at the green stone. "Why are you wearing this?"

"Because," she murmured, "it's mine."

He drew a long breath. "So it was your hand?"

She drooped.

"And that was the beginning?"

A nod.

"And what is to be the end? Esther, what *is* to be the end?"

No answer; no movement.

But her fingers were still in his.

"Dear, I love you!" His head went down, his lips touched the sweet, brown hand—and lingered.

Photo : Swaine.

The Popularity of P. G. WODEHOUSE

By AUGUSTUS MUIR

I.

"COMEDY," says Hazlitt, "is a graceful ornament to the civil order; the Corinthian capital of polished society. . . . It reflects the images of grace, of gaiety, and pleasure, and completes the perspective of human life." Hazlitt might have written these words to-day, with a P. G. Wodehouse story at his elbow.

The most popular living English humorist, the creator of Psmith, Jeeves, Archie, and Ukridge, has very distinct views on his own craft. If an historian were to divide humorous

writers into two main classes, the Satirists and the Humanists, P. G. Wodehouse would take his stand firmly with the human group. For pure satire he has no manner of use : he doesn't look at things that way. Always the satirist is out for blood ; he is determined to " tear off the mask of imposture from the world." But P. G. Wodehouse is out for laughter only. He sees the foibles of human nature, the stupidity and cupidity, the pose and jealousies and footling pride, the freakishness of cults, the follies of the bigot and the boor—he sees it all, and smiles, and quietly quotes an old adage about stones and glass houses. Cruelty and injustice apart, the weaknesses of humankind sting him neither to wrath nor scorn ; there is always a chuckle hovering round the corner, and he is after it with a butterfly net.

You could tell at a glance that he's that sort of fellow. Often a humorist is pictured as a long, lean, miserable man, with a cadaverous face, a bad liver, and a Phil May fringe : a man with a permanent grouch, whose humour is but an anodyne against the pains of a joyless world. To that figure P. G. Wodehouse is as violent a contrast as you could imagine. A big, broad, ruddy, clear-eyed fellow ; an open-air man, no hater of wind or rain ; in his day a boxer, swimmer, cricketer, Rugby-player ; a kindly, easy, matey, shy sort of chap, like a senior public-school boy who refuses to grow older. Quite unsophisticated, as though the Success, with a mighty big S, which has come to him was one of the least important things in his world. A man with an eager gusto for friendship. His eyes betray him. " Some theorist has held the view," said R. L. Stevenson, " that there is no feature in man so tell-tale as his spectacles ; that the mouth may be compressed and the brow smoothed artificially, but the sheen of the barnacles is diagnostic." P. G.'s spectacles have a radiating sheen of tolerant good-nature.

GOOD-NATURE : that is the keynote of the man and his work. Even his own career he refuses to regard seriously, affirming that nothing of the slightest importance has ever happened to him. The truth is that from the beginning his career has been a romance, the progressive sub-titles of which might be : Hard Work and Hope ; Hard Work but Up Against It ; Hard Work and Success.

Educated at Dulwich, he entered the Hong-Kong and Shanghai Bank. There he carefully refrained from scribbling jests and light verse on his blotting-pad, as the bank did not regard itself as a self-endowed forcing-house for youthful genius ; but in his spare time he scribbled hard. Two years passed ; then in 1902 came a juncture which deserves to be called Crisis One. He was offered a job with the bank out East.

For a young fellow with a taste for new experiences the temptation was obvious. We have to thank Sir William Beach-Thomas for his counter-offer of work on the famous " By the Way " column of *The Globe*. E. V. Lucas, C. L. Graves, Harold Begbie, Stephen Phillips had all sharpened their prentice wits on the same column ; A. S. M. Hutchinson worked on it for a few days, shortly before his appointment on the staff of *The Evening Standard*. P. G. Wodehouse took the job. It was tough work, writing a column a day, six days a week. There was no time to nibble your pen ; in something under two hours the thews and sinews had to be torn out of the morning papers, a witty comment tacked on to each, a set of light verses composed, and all put to press by eleven-thirty a.m., in time for the early edition. Invaluable experience it proved for P. G. Wodehouse. At this daily task he acquired the facility that now enables him to turn out, if need be, the best part of a musical comedy during an Atlantic voyage. For seven years he worked on this daily column, and his manner of leaving it brings us abruptly to the second crisis in his career. P. G. Wodehouse turned his eyes westward.

The chance that now came to him arose out of the occupation of his leisure hours. Probably no journalist before or since has striven harder as a free-lance, battering at editorial doors with futile wads of contributions. Articles of the *Tit-Bits* order streamed from his pen ; during one month, when a plebeian dose of mumps chained him to his room, he wrote thirty stories. He sold not one. But a little later he had success in *Punch ;* and the pages of *The Public School Magazine* were opened to him by the acceptance of an article on school sport for which he received the gracious honorarium of half a guinea. " The Babe and the Dragon," a short story included later in his book, " Tales of St. Austin's," gained him admittance to *The Captain*. Among the enthusiastic readers of that magazine—a magazine whose memory will be for ever beloved by thousands of Old Boys the world over—P. G. Wodehouse made a great reputation. Perhaps it is the reputation he most values to-day. Those boys who read " The Gold Bat," " The Head of Kay's," " The White Feather," and the Mike Jackson and Psmith serials in the pages of the old *Captain* will remain readers of P. G. Wodehouse as long as they live. They form the nucleus of his British public to-day ; they are his staunchest adherents.

But the singular thing, on looking back, is that in the years when he wrote these stories he seemed to be incapable of writing anything else. He felt at home with boys ;

though in his middle twenties, he was still a boy at heart; but when he attempted a yarn about grown-ups, the wheels of his invention became clogged, and editors grimly shook their heads. To-day Wodehouse is staggered at the dramatic emergence of a group of writers who, at twenty-five and under, seem to have plumbed the depths of all experience, and to whom the human soul is an open and mostly a melancholy book. At these beardless Tolstoys, these stripling Tchekovs, on whom the dolour of youth seems to have settled like a blanket of damp fog, Wodehouse gasps with amazement.

Mrs. P. G. Wodehouse.

His own twenties were years of hard, happy, and financially unsuccessful toil. "Love Among the Chickens" belongs to this period, but it did not bring him a fortune. In 1909, however, the finger of Fate is discernible. P. G. got five weeks' holiday, and decided to spend it in the United States. It was a country to which he had always felt drawn. His holiday visit there brought him to the parting of the waters; with a bundle of stories as his frail canoe and a pen as his paddle, he made the great decision.

II.

IT all came about in the simple way things often have. Within a week or two of landing in New York, Wodehouse sold two stories to American magazines. The price he got amazed him. In these days sixty pounds for a story was like the discovery of some new El Dorado, like the Caliph of Bagdad at his door with jewels and gold. But the problem was how long he would remain on nodding terms with the Caliph. P. G. decided to risk it. He sent his resignation to *The Globe* and settled down in New York to turn out the best stories that were in him. Soon critics talked of him there as the new O. Henry. On the appearance of his fiction in THE STRAND MAGAZINE the beginnings of real solid success came in England. In THE STRAND, of course, thousands of *Captain* boys, now grown older, read him eagerly. But at last a wide public felt that into their sky a new star had swung, with a light all its own; they recognized a new accent in English humour, a new lightness of touch, a new gaiety of spirit. For seventeen years the work of P. G. Wodehouse has been published regularly in THE STRAND, and for many years his short stories have appeared in no other British magazine.

Photo: Central News.

P. G. W. and his daughter.

A snapshot at Le Touquet.

But I am anticipating. Since 1909, seventeen years have passed. Wodehouse was twenty-eight then, and now he is forty-five. These years between have been filled with incessant work. The position he has won as the most popular English humorist has only been achieved by sheer hard grind; no literary success, other than the flash-in-the-pan variety, was ever won

by anything else. He has had his ups and downs, and the graph of his early fortunes, if carefully plotted, would pursue the zigzag course of a fever-chart. Just as Lord Birkenhead wrote in seven nights a legal text-book to raise the wherewithal to marry on, in similar happy-go-lucky circumstances P. G. Wodehouse married a charming English girl in New York, determined to make the guineas and the dollars roll in as they had never rolled before. In the teeth of so vigorous an onslaught, difficulties slowly began to melt. And one of the principal protagonists in this slowly culminating tale of success was a certain young gentleman with a taste for fancy socks and neckties; he carried a gold-knobbed cane; the terms "old fruit" and "old bean" sprang often to his lips; he had the kindest heart in the world, and the thickest head. His name was Bertie Wooster.

III.

AMERICA ate Bertie Wooster. So did England for that matter, and one must not forget Scotland and the English-speaking islands of the seven seas. "What ho!" as a greeting has simply dropped clean out of the common parlance of our gilded youth. Bertie Wooster killed it stone-dead. For how could a fellow talk to a fellow like a fellow in a book? It isn't done. That shows the strangle-hold that Bertie has on a certain section of Mayfair. Like a butterfly, the English "chappie" has been impaled for ever on a pin, and held up for popular inspection, by the creator of Bertie Wooster and Archie and their jovial coterie of kindred chumps.

With the quickening of popular demand, P. G. Wodehouse devoted a series, and then another, to the delineation of sublime foppery. But Bertie is more than a fool: he is a human fool, which makes all the difference. Bertie, who never lived, is more true to life than Beau Brummell, who did. Brummell was a coxcomb with a wit but no soul: Bertie has so much soul that quagmires simply yawn before him. There is a streak of Bertie in the most stolid of us. We do not laugh at him; we laugh at ourselves in Bertie's predicaments. That is where P. G.'s skill comes in. Granted that the light which plays on his stage is a light that never was on land or sea, yet in his yarns there is truth to the spirit of things. For our laughter springs from pity and not scorn; and we read P. G. Wodehouse to see the little real or imagined hitches of our own lives reflected in the distorting mirror which he holds up with a gesture of such gay, grotesque hilarity.

It was one of these hitches in the unquiet existence of Bertie Wooster that caused the creation of Jeeves: that strong and silent valet, that super-wise counsellor. Bertie, who was always doing somebody a bit of good, had got himself into such a mess that Wodehouse boggled at the solution.

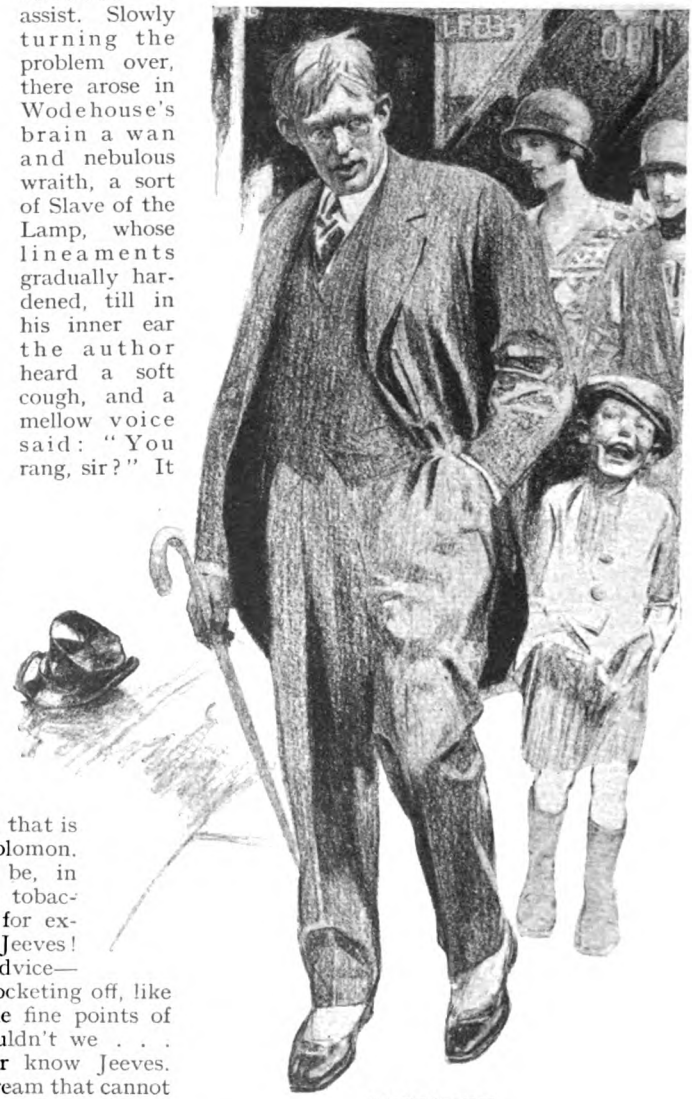
Although golf is his present game, a love for sport of all kinds has always been second nature with P. G. Wodehouse.

SOME FAMOUS WODEHOUSE CHARACTERS

PSMITH.

Could Bertie extricate himself from that hole? Never: it wasn't in him. Nor had any of his roistering pals sufficient grey matter to assist. Slowly turning the problem over, there arose in Wodehouse's brain a wan and nebulous wraith, a sort of Slave of the Lamp, whose lineaments gradually hardened, till in his inner ear the author heard a soft cough, and a mellow voice said: "You rang, sir?" It was Jeeves: it was the perfect man-servant: it was the very fellow he wanted. From that day onward Jeeves took charge of Bertie's affairs. And note again the author's skill. Jeeves is the person everybody is looking for — not necessarily as a valet, but as one who hands out counsel that is wiser than the counsel of Solomon. What a relief it would be, in moments of doubt, if the tobacconist round the corner, for example, were a man just like Jeeves! Shouldn't we take his advice—shouldn't we refrain from rocketing off, like Bertie, and mulling up the fine points of the Jeeves suggestion—shouldn't we . . . But there; we shall never know Jeeves. He is immaculate. He is a dream that cannot come true. We would relinquish a lot in life before we let go this Wodehouse vision of the valet who is almost the family solicitor.

Psycho-analysts, of course, will explain that P. G.'s conception has sprung from the fact that he suffers from a butler complex. It is true certainly that he both loves and fears that stern race of men. As a small boy he had difficulty in stifling the impulse to dig some butler in the ribs and see what



UKRIDGE.

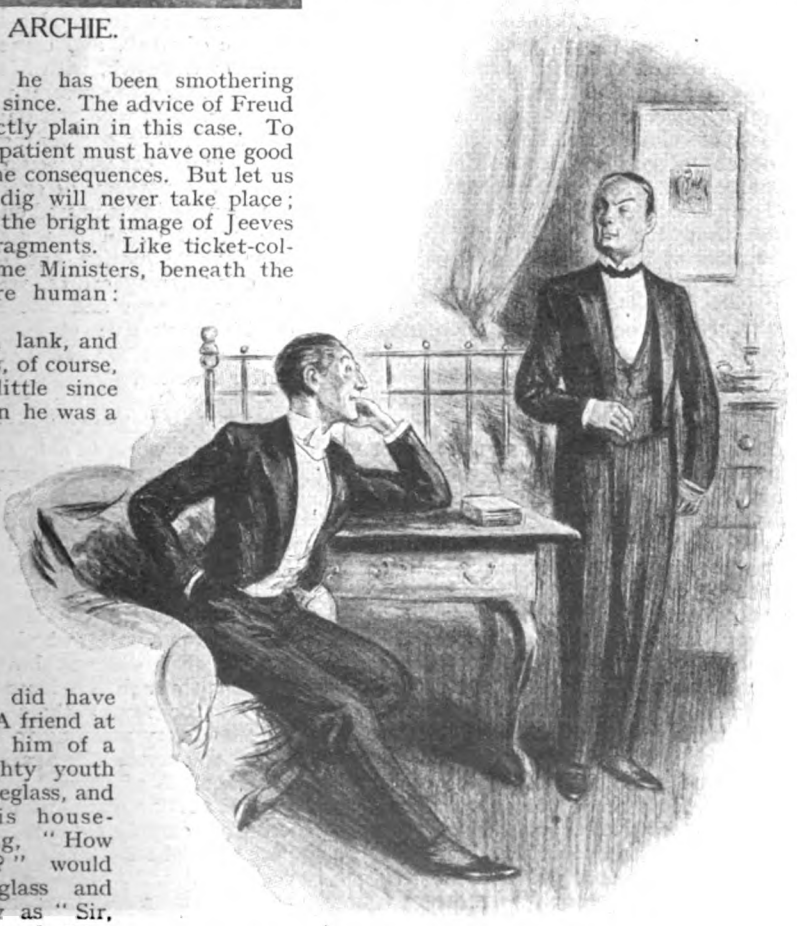
ARCHIE.

would happen; he has been smothering the impulse ever since. The advice of Freud or Jung is perfectly plain in this case. To cure himself the patient must have one good dig—and blow the consequences. But let us hope that that dig will never take place; it might shatter the bright image of Jeeves in a thousand fragments. Like ticket-collectors and Prime Ministers, beneath the crust butlers are human: Jeeves is ideal.

Psmith—staid, lank, and supercilious—has, of course, grown up a little since school-days, when he was a lost lamb at Sedleigh with Mike Jackson, the last of a line of doughty cricketers. Psmith was not drawn direct from real life, but Wodehouse confesses that the character did have a counterpart. A friend at Winchester told him of a long, thin, haughty youth who wore an eyeglass, and in reply to his housemaster's greeting, "How are you, ——?" would adjust his eyeglass and make such reply as "Sir, I grow thinn*ah* and thinn*ah*!" Such a character had intriguing possibilities, and in the end P. G. put it into a story.

In his hands Psmith has grown into something approaching a national comic figure. If the average plain, blunt Englishman met Psmith for the first time in real life, he would want to kick him, and kick him hard; but soon he would learn his mistake, and would find that a warm heart glows beneath the flawless uncreased waistcoat, that his wits are at the service of his weaker brethren, and that Psmith's brand of "psocialism" is a sane attitude of mind rather than a virulent political creed. To America, Psmith typifies the imperturbable Englishman, just as Bertie is the human friendly Silly Ass to the *n*th, and Archie the sublimation of all the young bucks who have ever waked the echoes at the coffee-stall in Piccadilly about the time the first milk-cart rattles past.

Ukridge, that modern Micawber, is inter-



BERTIE WOOSTER AND JEEVES.

national; there must surely be Ukridges among even the Hottentots. In many guises, and under many names, he has been the theme of poets of all ages. He is Merlin chasing the Gleam of Fortune; he is knightly chivalry and gay improvidence, melted down and poured into a rather shabby suit of ready-mades. His poor cracked shield bears the device of a Hopeful Heart, and the local pop-shop has just refused to advance him two bob on it. As a fact, a fellow exactly like Ukridge did have an existence in reality. He was an acquaintance of W. Townend, one of P. G.'s oldest friends, and himself a writer we do not see enough of. Townend's descriptions of the quaint bird were diverting. Situations began to build themselves around him. Pounded by the Wodehouse pestle, heated in the Wodehouse crucible, Ukridge emerged as the man we all know, complete to the bit of ginger-beer wire holding together his spectacles.

His first appearance was in "Love Among the Chickens," but he has developed amazingly since those days. Together with Bertie, Jeeves, Psmith, Lord Emsworth, that absent-minded peer, and the Oldest Member, that snapper-up of unconsidered trifles of club-house lore, that supreme exponent of golf and its lurking tragedies, Ukridge is P. G.'s favourite character among his own creations. And it is of interest to note that his own favourites are the favourites of the public also.

IV.

"WHERE on earth does the man get his ideas from?" It is a frequent question. For P. G. Wodehouse, the building of character, the devising of atmosphere, are almost unconscious processes; they are the easy, the pleasant, part of the business. It is the plot, the hook on which the whole thing hangs, that demands the toughest of brain-work. Wodehouse has drawers packed with newspaper cuttings; he never lets slip the simplest news note which might form the germ of a yarn. Sometimes the anecdote of a pal will give him an idea. Unlike most authors, he keeps no note-book; he detests the things; but in his desk he has bundles of typewritten foolscap sheets covered with seed-thoughts for future work. The idea fixed, he sits down solidly in an arm-chair, pipe in mouth, and hammers the plot out of the raw stuff that pleasant day-dreams are made on.

The first draft of a yarn he rushes off at high speed on his typewriter. Some authors, like Arnold Bennett, put down a sentence, and that sentence goes to the printer without the alteration of a word. Wodehouse reads and polishes, re-reads and re-types, balancing one part with another, cutting ruthlessly till sometimes a story is lopped down to half its initial length. To re-write three or four times is nothing to him; often he takes fifteen trial shots at the beginning of a yarn before he is confident that he has got his readers in a ju-jitsu grip within the first few paragraphs. The truth is that P. G. Wodehouse has an acute instinctive sense of form. His technique — neglecting, of course, his mannerisms, which are another matter—would form a fruitful subject for any young writer to study. "The proportion of one part to another and to the whole," said R. L. Stevenson; "the elision of the useless, the accentuation of the important, and the preservation of a uniform character from end to end—these, taken together, constitute technical perfection." And whether the matter in hand be a gay farce or a sombre folk-tale, a lyric or a scientific study of sand-dunes, technique is technique.

P. G. Wodehouse is never quite satisfied that he has written a story as well as that story can be written. He likes to lay aside a piece of work, and come back to it in a week or a month, with his critical faculties undulled by the warmth of recent composition. His wife and daughter also sit in judgment, thus completing a mixed triumvirate of censors who weigh every phrase and assess the potency of each chuckle, before the manuscript is passed out for publication. The result of all this labour is not only popular acclamation, but the warm approval of our literary critics, who appreciate his clean-cut prose and the skilled chiselling of his narrative style. Our best-selling humorist is also, like Leonard Merrick, a writer's writer.

PERHAPS the most essential part of his day's work is a five-mile tramp. In cloth cap and heavy brogues he sets out, rain or fine, from his house near Park Lane; and for a real good country walk he considers there is nothing to beat the streets of London. His work is grouped round this morning or afternoon tramp, and is largely dependent on it. Which is what we should expect from a writer who has never produced a yarn that did not have a high breeze blowing through it. More than that, he is one of the few authors who devote ten minutes every morning to a rigid system of physical exercises. Against such rigours, those moods of gloom, which are the proverbial portion of the professional humorist, stand no earthly chance. To be fit is to be happy, might be taken as one of his main rules of life. Always in fighting trim, he never needs a holiday; at Hunstanton or Monte Carlo, at Le Touquet or Long Island, he spends several hours each day at his typewriter.

With much travel he has acquired the knack of writing under all manner of conditions. He is not the type of fidgety genius who must have the picture of a mauve sunset above his desk, or a green golliwog strapped to his inkpot, for inspiration. He is as much at home drifting in a punt with his typewriter, as sitting at the dressing-table of an hotel bedroom, or in the swaying cabin of an Atlantic liner. Give him a kitchen table in an attic, and he is happy. His one crotchet is the old typewriter which he bought second-hand fifteen years ago in New York. It goes with him everywhere, this ancient and serviceable machine. He trembles with fear as he watches railway porters stagger with it across a platform He has bought other machines, only to discard them for the old, tried friend. For the Wodehouse museum of the future, his typewriter, with its huge, unwieldy case, will be the principal exhibit!

V.

YOU can tell a man by his hobbies as well as by his friends. A love for sport of all kinds has been second nature with P. G. Wodehouse. At Dulwich he was in both the cricket and football teams; and to-day he is nearly as keen on watching these games as ever he was to play them. If he is in England, he faithfully reports every important Dulwich Rugby match for his old school magazine; some of the best work he ever did has been turned out for its columns. Proficient in both swimming and boxing, "The White Feather," which he published about twenty years ago in *The Captain* and issued later in book form, is a boxing classic. He considers it among the best of his own school stories; it certainly shows an inside knowledge of the sport, and contains one of the best descriptions of the psychology of a ring-fight in modern literature.

His present game is golf, but you won't catch him talking about it. He prefers to leave the talking to the other man. It is the human side of golf that interests him.

> A niblick on the golf-bag's rim,
> A simple niblick is to him,
> And it is nothing more.

But if golf is not altogether an obsession—except as material for his side-splitting golf stories—talk to him about dogs and his eye will brighten. Dogs take to P. G. instinctively: they spot him at once as a potential pal. And now that he has bought a house and shaken himself down permanently in London, he will, if he is not careful, be setting up in rivalry to the famous Battersea institution, and be collecting dogs as other men collect stamps.

Miss Leonora Wodehouse.

Photo: Lafayette.

If in his somewhat nomadic life, lived partly in England, partly in America, he found it impossible to cart dogs across the Atlantic, he could cart as many books as the tonnage would allow. His library is inclusive, rather than selective, and his tastes catholic. By dint of watchful perseverance, he is able to read

the novels of Edgar Wallace almost as fast as they tumble from the dictaphone of that modern Eugene Sue. Unlike many humorists, Wodehouse gets enormous pleasure from the works of other humorous writers. Ian Hay, Denis Mackail, D. B. Wyndham Lewis, Harry Leon Wilson, and Ben Travers (particularly "Mischief") are among his favourites, and his appreciation of them is as frank and sincere as if he himself had never coined a jest. James Branch Cabell and George Meredith jostle near at hand on his bookshelves; Babbitt he considers a creation of genius; and Bob Pretty, that rustic rapscallion of W. W. Jacobs, has given him many an honest chuckle.

Wodehouse has written enormously for the American musical comedy stage, and on this side had a hand in the production of "Kissing Time," "The Cabaret Girl," "The Golden Moth," and others. But, like Barrie, he is no great theatre-goer, though he is a great clubman. He has been co-opted as a member of so many clubs that he is apt to lose count; but you will not find him in those places where epigrams are hurled across the tankards. He prefers to take refuge in a quiet corner of the Constitutional, that vast caravanserai in Northumberland Avenue, where in the depths of an arm-chair he feels as peaceful and safe from interruption as a traveller on an oasis of the Sahara desert.

America might be classed as one of his principal hobbies. He went there on a visit as far back as 1904, five years previous to the critical voyage when he decided to dig in his roots on the other side. Since then the sky-line of New York has altered as radically as the fashions and the food. "Even nowadays, if I stay away for more than six months," he says, "I go back to find the whole place is different. They're sure to have pulled down some sky-scrapers in the interval, and rushed up taller ones in their places." And they probably call them heaven-bumpers or something quite new, for in these present days they change their slang more speedily than their Presidents. "New York is a great city," says P. G.; "a fine city—if it weren't for the motor-cars —thousands upon thousands of them, tearing everywhere, battling their way through the crush. Why don't they prohibit motor-cars instead of the other thing?"

VI.

At present P. G. Wodehouse is preparing to tackle a new novel; the theme is simmering. One of these mornings he will pull on a white sweater and sit down to the job of composition. It will be a humorous book, though in the case of most humorists that does not go without saying. Dan Leno longed to play Hamlet; Mark Twain shrank from the public conception of himself as a mere merry-maker. But P. G. is racked with no desire to stray outside his own orbit. His ambition is to write his own type of story as well as it can be written. To do one's own work as well as it can be done: come to think of it, could ambition aim higher? At the point of a pistol, P. G. Wodehouse might admit that he hopes to leave this world a more cheerful place than he found it. Such, in these none-too-cheerful post-war days, is his mission.

I have to add a word about the man's modesty. "Plum," as his friends call him, is one of the most unspoilt fellows I have ever met, and will talk about everything in the world except himself. When he does touch on his own affairs, it is with the shy air of a Rugby player who has done well for his side rather than as the author who has scored a tremendous personal success by his own endeavours.

The stories of Wodehouse form the bedside books of statesmen and professors, as well as the plain, ordinary, unknown Englishman. Lord Oxford and Asquith acknowledges himself a frank devotee; from the contemplation of philosophic doubt, Lord Balfour turns with relief to the creator of Jeeves; in the opinion of so sound a critic as Robert Lynd, the best holiday reading in the world is "anything by Dr. Johnson and something by P. G. Wodehouse"; while Sir Oliver Lodge believes both in spirits and high spirits—"Jill the Reckless" I consider a masterpiece," he says; "the entire book is as good and wholesome a piece of humour as has been produced in this generation. . . . I am not sure that we of this generation are sufficiently appreciative of the good work that is being produced now."

Laudatus a laudatis, and with an enormous public in England and America crying out for more and more of his work, P. G. Wodehouse has at last reaped the reward of his early efforts. His stories supply a need; they satisfy a hunger. And when the details of them fade from our mind, the spirit of them remains, a jolly possession. The writer's broad and healthy humanity, his gay outlook, his happy-go-lucky gesture to life: these remain. "The true comic spirit is in the blossom of the nettle, not the sting." P. G. Wodehouse culls the blossoms of good-humour, leaving the stings of bitterness for lesser men to pick.

A New P. G. Wodehouse Story next month.

The PIGEON

By

FRANCIS GAITHER

Illustrated by
S. ABBEY

IN the first place, I must make it clear that I never saw Ballard, never heard of him until that afternoon at La Plage d'Hyères. He was standing on the pebbly beach putting pistol balls through crockery plates tossed by his chauffeur when I came out of the black umbrella wood. He smiled, nodded at another marksman leaning against the sea-wall, and said :—

" We were about to fight a duel. Would you like to be my second ? "

" I shouldn't like to be your adversary," I replied, as his pistol cracked again and another plate splintered in mid-air.

The train from Les Salins whistled, and I started for the station.

" Going toward Nice ? " he called. And when I answered that Nice was my destination, he waved an arm in the direction of a big motor-car on top of the embankment. " I'm going there," he declared, "and I should be most happy to have your company."

I was not particularly attracted towards Ballard, though he was certainly affable ; ingratiating ; I should almost say fascinating, if I thought that wouldn't give you the wrong idea of him. He was a big, upstanding man in tweeds. Closely shaven, a heavy beard darkened his cheek and moulded chin. And when his up-carried arm tightened the loose coat about his waist, one fancied the muscles rippling under his vest.

" That's very kind of you," I said, and we were soon speeding across the marshes toward the mountains of the Moors.

We had, I remember, a delightful drive along the rock-bound coast, with the valleys all purple in the evening, the sea red in the sun, and the lights of Cannes like a fallen veil of stars when dusk came. Of course, we talked about people and things at home, as travellers will when they are far away. We discovered that each of us knew this man and that, and that separately we had each had the same host. The host happened not to be one of my enthusiasms. But in Ballard's mind he proved to be a common bond ; and when Ballard set me down in front of my hotel at Nice, he said :—

" How would you like to come up to my villa to-morrow evening and spend the week-end with us ? "

I hesitated. But he persuaded me. He said his wife, who had just got back from Paris, would be very glad to see somebody from home. Furthermore, he said, they were going to drive over to Monte Carlo to meet two of her friends arriving on a boat.

" It will be a nice party," he urged.

And, having no other plan, I accepted.

BUT I forgot all about Ballard when, inside my hotel, the concierge met me with an apologetic putting-together of his fingers.

" A gentleman arrived to see you, sir. He's waiting in your room."

Harry Keynes was sitting by the window when I pushed open my door.

" Harry, you wretch, why didn't you tell me you were coming ? "

" I didn't know," he answered curiously, without getting up. " You're glad to see me, aren't you ? "

Of course I was glad to see him, even if he did seem a little gloomy about something. I was glad to see him for himself, and, indeed, I was not sorry to be able to telephone Ballard next morning to cancel that somewhat impulsive engagement.

" Oh, bring him along ! " said Ballard, hospitably. " We need another man for the party, anyway."

Again I accepted—I don't know why, unless it was simply that the man wouldn't take refusal—and went back to tell Harry about it. Harry seemed quite indifferent.

"Our host will send a car for us at six," I told him.

"Oh, all right," he answered, without even asking the name of the man we were going to visit. "What are we going to do between now and four o'clock?"

"And what, for Heaven's sake, are we going to do at four?"

He flushed. I was sure even then that he flushed.

"I—er—doesn't one go to the Casino?"

"Why don't you get your racket and let's have a game?"

"Oh, tennis," he said deprecatingly, and looked at his watch.

I can't really tell you what we did do. It seemed to me that he wouldn't even talk. I tried to get him to tell me something about his stay in Paris. But he evaded me. He said it was cold in Paris, and foggy.

"It must be lunch time," he said, when it was still quite early.

I thought perhaps food might interest him. But he ate only some olives and one of those pickled artichokes—you know.

ALONG toward three-fifteen—after much rubbing of his watch crystal—he spoke of a terrible thirst.

"Think I'll stroll out and get a drink," he said, restlessly.

I know now that he was trying to get rid of me. But I didn't know then.

I said: "I'll go with you."

And at half-past three we were sitting at a table in the Casino.

It was, of course, too soon for tea, and though the stalls in the theatre were sprinkled with dull people, the building seemed singularly empty. Harry ordered drinks for us, took a few sips from his glass, lighted a cigarette, crushed it out in his saucer, then lighted another one. He looked often at his watch, and oftener at the doorway.

We waited in that fashion until the place had livened up considerably. The curtain had gone down on the stage, the orchestra had moved over among the drink tables, and two or three couples had begun to dance. Then Harry got up suddenly.

"You don't mind, old chap?" he said, darting off in the direction of the doorway. And when I saw him next he was in the cleared rectangle of the dancing floor. He had a woman in his arms: a girl.

Of course, that explained most things. It explained why Harry had shown up unexpectedly in Nice. It explained his preoccupation. But I think I was a little piqued at his want of confidence in me. Why couldn't he tell me about the girl—if he was in love with her? And why should he look so deucedly unhappy about it all?

She was a pretty girl; a slender little thing of rounded curves and bright hair curled close to her little head. She looked quite at home in Harry's arms. I watched them till the dance was over. I saw them sit down together at a distant table. I waited for Harry's signal. But he didn't glance in my direction. And when the music recommenced, he took her in his arms again.

They danced three times, I think. Then Harry took her coat from the back of her chair and put it on her. He led her to the door and came back to me alone.

"You don't mind, old chap?" he murmured, without bothering to change the formula. Then: "You know, it's the last time I am going to see her."

WE went back to our hotel and dressed. Ballard's car came and took us to his villa. It must have been seven o'clock when, from the hearthrug in Ballard's drawing-room, I saw a girl with yellow hair divide the green curtains to come in to us.

"Ah, my wife," said Ballard, rising.

She went quite pale on seeing Harry. For an instant she stopped on the threshold of the room. But as Ballard spoke our names she came forward and gave each of us a hand.

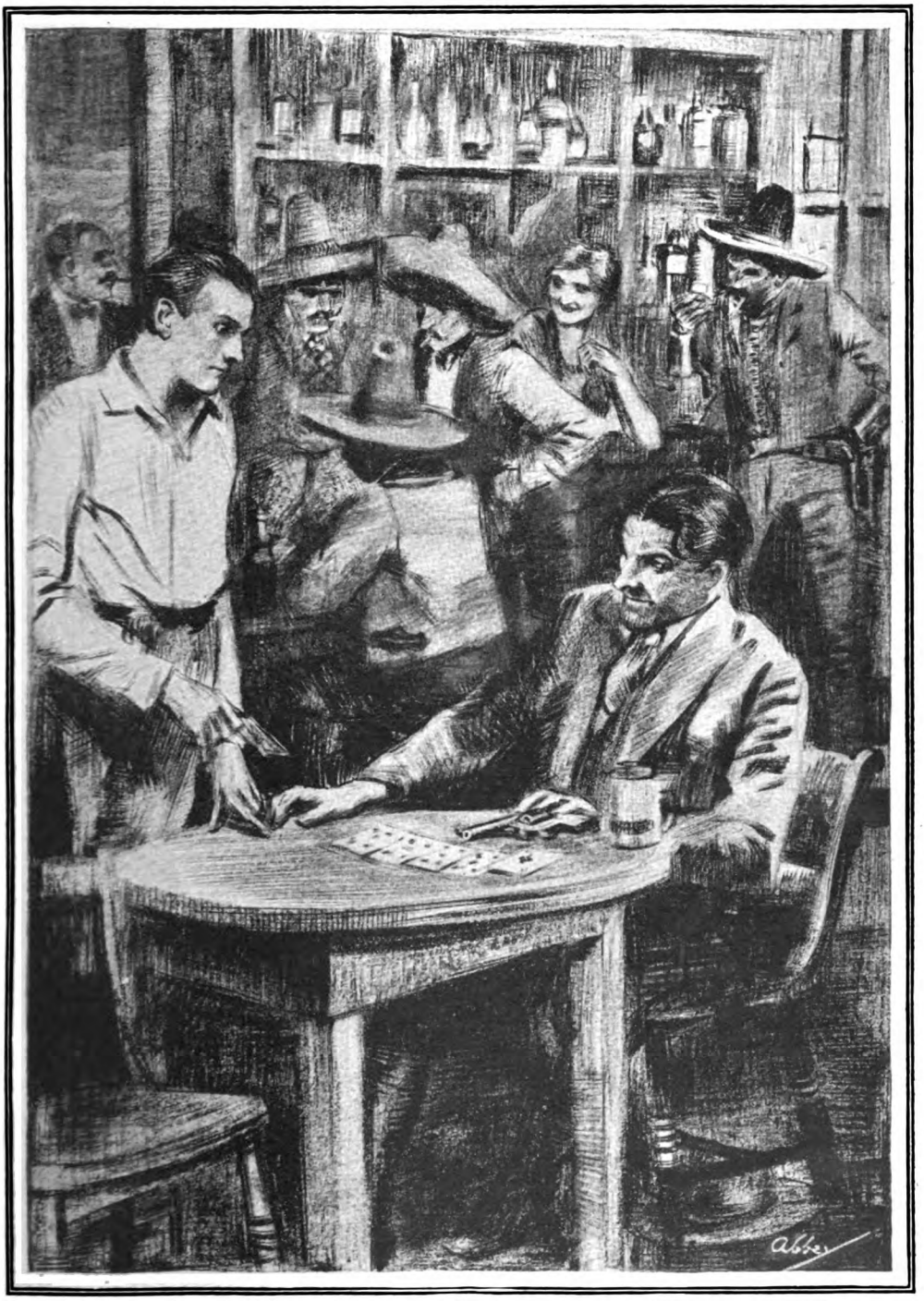
"How nice of you!" she said impartially. "There hasn't been a soul in Nice."

Harry Keynes was in love with another man's wife. She was in love with him. And, having said good-bye for ever, they were fortuitously met again two hours later in the house of her husband.

Melodrama? Well, I can't say it struck me as being melodrama. I thought it a little unfortunate. And it certainly seemed foolish to me that Harry and Mrs. Ballard should pretend never to have seen each other before. Such pretences have always to break down sooner or later; and I felt that Ballard, when he should learn some time that they had been playing round together in Paris, would have the right to be both angry and suspicious. I didn't like, somehow, to think of Ballard angry and suspicious.

But Ballard was a most genial host. It seemed to me that he was particularly attentive and polite to Harry—talked to him a great deal, got up once, while the butler was out, to fill his glass, acted, indeed, as if Harry, and not I, were the inspiration of the party.

There was nothing obtrusive about all this, you understand; and I don't know how to tell you, without exaggerating, that once or twice, while Ballard was talking to me or to his wife, he looked at Harry in a peculiar sort of way. His eyes had a screwed-up look, like the eyes of a man trying visually to shape something.



"You cheat!" he wanted to say. But there was a pistol lying on the table in front of the man. A moment before it hadn't been there.

After dinner I saw that fleeting look again. We were gathered about the bridge-table—we hadn't sat down—when Harry said :—

" You play cards very well, don't you, Mr. Ballard ? "

It was that trying-to-see look, even more momentary.

Ballard said : " Shall we cut for deal ? " And altogether ignored the question.

Ballard did play a clever game. He " made " surprising bids at extraordinary odds. There was something deft about his very handling of the cards. He won, and the evening passed quickly and easily. When, shortly before midnight, the party broke up and started for bed, I felt that the most difficult fraction of the hours we had agreed to spend in Ballard's company was safely passed.

I knew, of course, that the accident of my bringing Harry to Ballard's house was not a happy one. I knew it was painful for him to see the woman he loved in the company of her husband. I knew that, really, he ought never to have seen her again. But in the clear morning it was impossible to take a very serious view of the situation. When I stepped through my window on to the wide terrace, I saw a glittering sea rise slanting to meet a curved and enamelled sky.

Harry stood beside a little fountain in front of a yellow wall and morosely watched a jewelled spray.

" I say, old man," he answered my morning greeting, " have you ever been a coward ? "

I supposed, naturally enough, that he was referring in some way to the part he was playing in Ballard's house. So I was relieved when he started talking about something that had happened a long time ago : an adventure of his boyhood which had come to him in Northern Mexico.

IT was a queer thing for him to be telling me, queer, too, that he should be emotional about it. He described a long room, garish with yellow light and reeking with smoke ; quite an ordinary sort of frontier gambling-room, I suppose, with a bar at one end and rows of rough tables. It was full of people—men, the usual sort of women. And at one of the tables sat a boy. The boy was nineteen and he shouldn't have been there ; because his father, a New Yorker interested in Mexican mining properties, had left him safe in quite an orderly hotel elsewhere, while he himself went off to visit a mine. But time had grown heavy on the boy's hands ; he had a pocket full of money, and a vague idea that somewhere toward the North—up near the California line—there was a dazzling city of delight. The city, when he got there, was quite different from what he had expected. It was hot and foul. It frightened him. But he was ashamed of fear. He stayed.

Across the table from the boy sat a man twice the boy's age, and it was about a thing the man did to the boy that Harry was trying to tell me. But it all seemed so remote in time and space, and most of all in significance, that I found myself listening with difficulty.

The boy had lost his money to the man—quite a good deal, it seemed—and was pushing his chair back from the table to go away. But when he stooped to pick up his hat off the floor, he saw a card that lay face upward almost between the man's feet. He looked back at the table where the man's hand still lay exposed—the ace and four fives—and then back at the card on the floor. It was the five of hearts. His head swam as he retrieved it. Words sprang to his throat as he took it between his thumb and forefinger and laid it on the table in front of the man.

" You cheat ! " he wanted to say. But there was a pistol lying on the table in front of the man. A moment before it hadn't been there. And at the sight of the pistol, and of the smile on the face of the man, a nauseating terror seized him.

" What is that card ? " asked the man.

The boy stammered—he couldn't even say it was the five of hearts. He shrank back when the man rose from the table. He expected death, perhaps. But the man only looked quizzically at the card. He took it and pinned it against the wall. Then he stepped ten paces off and shot. He pierced the four hearts at the four corners with four bullets delivered at ten paces. He took the card from the wall and offered it to the boy.

" You were mistaken, weren't you ? You see it's an ace."

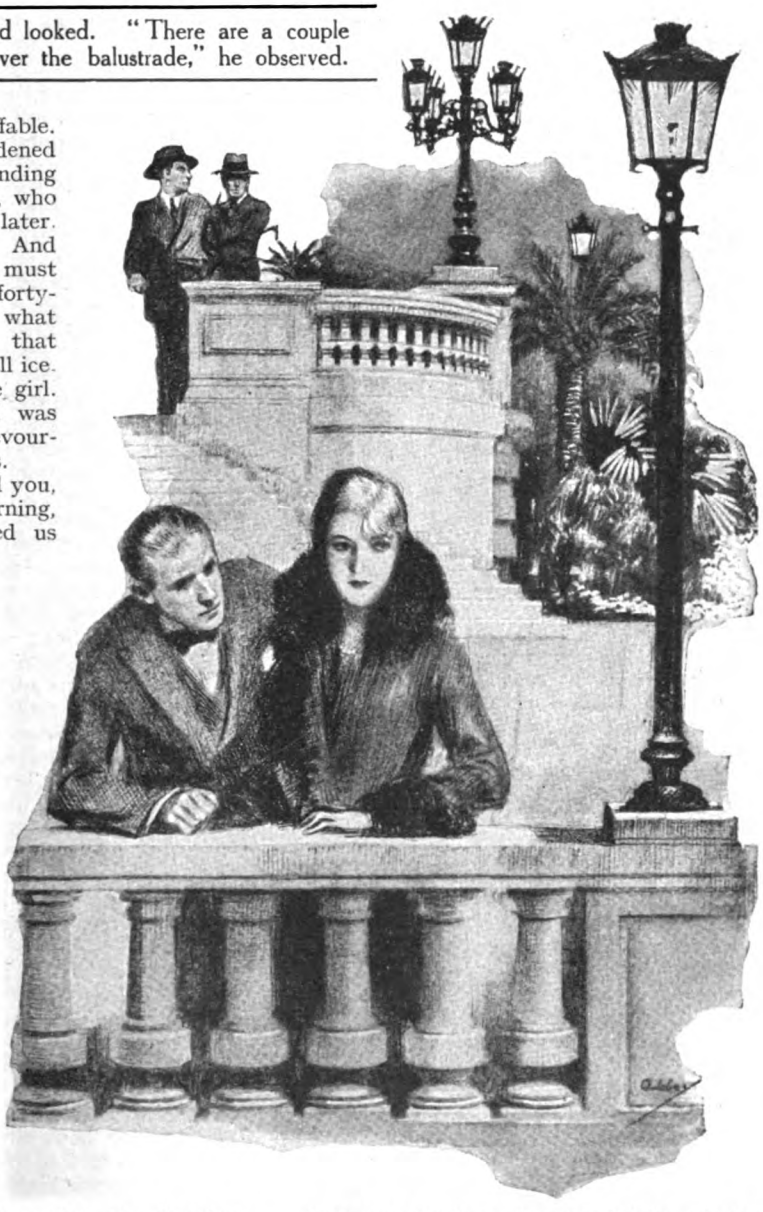
Then, through a dissolving rim of faces, the boy found the black rectangle of an open door which let him into the starry night.

" You understand ? " said Harry. " I was afraid. Afraid of him."

OUTSIDE the terraced court a motor horned. A long car glided in front of the grilled gate, and Ballard, alighting, called to us.

" Are you all ready for the Grande Corniche ? "

I can't say I knew then that Ballard was the man of the Mexican gambling hell. But I know I had a sudden feeling against him. There was something a little too suave about



Ballard stopped and looked. "There are a couple of lovers leaning over the balustrade," he observed.

him, a little too affable. And that feeling hardened when I saw him standing beside Nina Ballard, who came out a moment later. She was so young. And Ballard—well, he must have been forty or forty-five, only that isn't what I mean. Beneath that smile of his he was all ice. I was sorry for the girl. And most of all I was sorry for Harry, devouring her with his eyes.

But, as I have told you, it was a glorious morning, and the sun warmed us as we left the house and went speeding toward Monte Carlo. The car crossed the shallow river and climbed the olive slopes of Mont Gros. You know how the road there winds higher and higher until the whole valley of the Paillon spreads below, and how the bald top of Mont Chauve catches the morning sun, and the little villages gleam pink and white and the sea slants up to meet the impossibly blue sky. The miles sped by until we reached the vicinity of La Turbie. Then, just short of the broken and despoiled column of Augustus, the chauffeur stopped the car and said he'd have to change a tyre.

We all got out to stretch our legs.

"I've got a brace of pistols there in that box," said Ballard, pointing to the running-board. "Like to try a shot?"

He spoke to all of us, but it was Harry—Harry, of course, who answered.

"You shoot very well, don't you, Mr. Ballard?"

Ballard didn't seem to hear. He was searching his pockets.

"Has anybody a cigarette?" he asked; and, when nobody had, excused himself and trotted off toward the village.

Harry took one of the pistols and loaded it. He drove his cane into the hard ground. He put a pebble on the flat knob of it, stood ten paces back, and shot the pebble off.

"Oh, do we have to shoot?" asked Nina Ballard.

Harry looked at her and put the pistol back into its box.

I said: "How long did it take you to learn that trick?"

"I'm twenty-nine," he answered. "It must have been ten years."

We were ready to start when Ballard got back. I saw by the clock in front of the car that it was already noon. The boat was due at three. By four I hoped to have Harry on the train with me, going back to Nice. I was glad the time was already well spent. For I knew then, as plainly as if Harry had told me, who Ballard was.

"I wonder if the boat will be on time?" said Nina Ballard.

It wasn't. We found a bulletin in our hotel down at Monte Carlo which said it had been delayed several hours in getting out of Marseilles—it was one of those world cruise things, you know—and that it wouldn't arrive till after dark.

"Well, what shall we do?" asked Ballard, amiably. "Luncheon here, of course. And then—Mentone? Or shall we stay here and waste our substance at the gaming table?"

"Oh," said Nina Ballard, "let's stay here and feed the pigeons."

Ballard laughed—I didn't like his laugh.

"You're a child, Nina," he said.

I thought at the time he was denying her. But it was Ballard's style to be thoughtful and ingratiating. He said we'd stay at Monte Carlo. And after luncheon, when we were having our coffee on the terrace of the Café de Paris, he flung one of those blue ten-franc notes to the waiter.

"I want a bag of grain," he said.

I was a little confused about him when he took the bag and followed his wife into the open square. But I was thinking more of Harry than of Ballard. Harry's eyes rested hungrily upon the stooping girl, about whom swirled and fluttered a crowd of pigeons lured down from Moorish cornices to feed at her feet.

"Harry," I said, now that I had him alone for a moment, "do you know you're dealing with a dangerous man?"

"A man who frightens boys," he answered; and when I tried to give him my own opinion of Ballard, he lashed out angrily: "Well, what do you want me to do?"

"I want you"—I spoke as easily as I could—"to get on the first train with me. You told me yesterday that you never meant to see his wife again."

He shrugged. "Oh, yesterday," he said, as if yesterday were a thousand years ago, "I didn't know who her husband was."

But, after all, he couldn't stay for ever. It was already four o'clock. By eight at the latest we should be quit of the man's hospitality. Such, at least, was the conclusion I had reached when Ballard came back to our table. He was alone. His wife stood in the square with a pigeon on her wrist.

"They've got a shooting arrangement down under the cliff," said Ballard. "Would you like to try a shot?"

He put the question to both of us, impartially.

Harry said: "They shoot live pigeons, don't they?"

"Yes."

"I don't."

It was as quick as that. But I saw the eyes of the two men meet for an instant in hostility. Then Harry turned. I saw him picking his way among the tables toward Mrs. Ballard. I saw the pigeon fly off her wrist at his approach, and then settle confidently back again.

"I'll go with you, Ballard," I said; and together we went toward the pits.

I KNEW when we got there what Harry meant; for I found it a very cruel sport. I think I should say it's no sport at all.

Perhaps you know about the mechanism. I don't. But I do know that along the greensward in front of the stand there is a series of trap-doors. Every now and then one of them opens and a pigeon flies out.

He flies out of the dark prison underground into the bright afternoon. He sees the wide blue of heaven. He goes soaring toward freedom. Then there is a shot. Perhaps the pigeon doesn't hear the shot. He falls. A small fox-terrier trots out and brings the body in.

Ballard stayed there killing pigeons until I began to hate him. He had a crowd about him, of course, for he never missed. He was quite vain of his shooting. But somehow I fancied his taking a special delight in the murder of it. Once or twice I opened my lips to beg him to go away. But where should we go? Back there to the higher terrace where Harry waited with Ballard's wife?

There was, I observed, a certain blue pigeon which kept circling high above the traps. I showed it to the man who loaded Ballard's gun for him.

"That's odd," said the man. "They usually keep away when there's shooting going on. Maybe we've got his mate shut up here in the traps."

I don't know about that—I know nothing about pigeons. But I do know it was rather heartbreaking to me to watch that bird spiral down whenever the traps opened, as if he had come to see who died. And I think he affected Ballard in a different sort of way. Once or twice I saw Ballard following him with his eye along the gun-barrel. But the pigeon came within range only once. That was the time he moaned

—oh, yes, I can swear to the moan; and one of the men in the crowd said to Ballard; "I believe you've killed his mate."

Ballard laughed.

"If he comes as close again I'll get him too."

The blue pigeon didn't come back any more. He made a wide circle out over the water and flew back toward the Moorish cornices of the Casino.

IT was dusk when Ballard and I got back upon the heights. Porters in the uniform of Monaco were removing the blue chairs from the chilling terrace.

"Everybody's gone in," I said.

Ballard stopped and looked.

"There are a couple of lovers leaning over the balustrade," he observed.

Ballard's eyes were pretty keen, and I don't think he had mistaken the figures of his wife and Harry. But he pretended not to know them. They were standing very close together, and they were silent, staring seaward. Their silence was eloquent. Lovers? It was no wild guess.

"Harry!" I called.

He turned, hearing my voice, and Ballard laughed.

"I suppose they hadn't noticed that it's cold here," he said—ostensibly to me. Rather elaborately he offered his wife an arm. "We might go into the Casino a little," he suggested.

There was something reassuring about the Casino. This at least, I told myself, was no gambling hell in which a man might draw a pistol and put four bullets through the five of hearts. Men played decorously at Monte Carlo, and in a silence that was almost funereal.

The voices of the croupiers were dull, as if the life in their little world were in a state of suspension. I know I didn't want to play, and Harry didn't. Mrs. Ballard was extraordinarily quiet. But Ballard walked over to the first of the tables, where ten francs buys a pawn, and began to put his money on the red.

You know—I've told you—that he did everything well, whether it was breaking a plate with a bullet, or playing bridge, or murdering trapped pigeons. He had an uncanny run of luck. He stood beside a queer little French girl with great black eyes and hungry hollows in her cheeks and dropped his pawns on the red diamond. It was some time, I think, before I noticed that he was playing her game; that he waited to see what she was going to do. Sometimes she didn't bet. But more often she put her money on the red. Invariably Ballard followed her, and almost invariably he won.

The girl interested me, not merely because of her luck, but because I thought her a queer type for the gaming table. It occurred to me to wonder if she were not playing desperately for bread. She was very tense about it. She would put down one brass counter at a time—never more—and then she would greedily pocket her winnings. She seemed to be quite alone. And then two women came up and joined her.

The coming of the two women diverted her. It diverted me also, so that I didn't see whether she put down the next time or not. But somebody was betting on the red, and when the play was over—it had gone as usual—she put out a hand to take up two of the pawns.

"Pardon me," said Ballard to the girl, "but they're mine."

He smiled. I think Ballard must always have smiled at an adversary. But the girl did not smile. She looked frightened. Her great eyes shrank away from him, and she called out sharply to the croupier. I think the croupier himself was not quite sure—I wasn't, as I have told you. But if the croupier hesitated, it was only to look first at the girl and then swiftly at Ballard. A croupier must never hesitate.

"*A vous*," he said to Ballard.

IT was a very quiet moment. You know how quiet such moments can be. The great room was a mausoleum. There was only a whir here and a click there. And Harry himself spoke in a low voice. Though I was standing very close when he thrust himself between Ballard and me, I can't be sure of his words. I thought there were two words only.

"You cheat!" I thought I heard Harry say.

But you know that might easily have been an echo out of my own head.

Ballard made no answer at all, unless you could call that look of his an answer. This time his eyes were not screwed up, for it was a remembering look. It said as distinctly as if he had spoken: "Oh, yes, I recall you quite definitely now." He put the two counters in his pocket.

"I'm going to see about the boat," he told his wife; and went toward the check-room for his hat.

Nina Ballard, I am sure, had understood nothing of what must have appeared to her only a pantomime. She said:—

"I shall be glad to get out of this hot room. It's given me a headache. Is there water anywhere?"

Harry didn't answer Nina Ballard. But he walked off in the direction of the bar.

"If you don't mind," I said to her, after

As the ship threw her searchlight over Monte Carlo, the pigeon came down with beating wings and hit Ballard in the face.

what may have been one minute or five, "I'll go and look for Harry."

She did mind, rather; or else she thought it strange that I should leave her.

She said: "What shall I do if you leave me too?"

I shook my head and walked off.

I found the bar and Harry was not there. I had not passed him in the corridors. I went hatless to the entrance and stood under the bright lights looking for him in the Place. It seemed foolish to seek him outside the Casino. But I remembered that Ballard was outside, and fantastic thoughts were going round in my head.

At the corner of the Casino nearest the hotel I found Ballard's car. The chauffeur was sitting in the wheel seat smoking a cigarette.

"Have you seen Mr. Keynes?" I asked, striving terribly to keep the fright out of my voice.

"Boat's coming in," he said, nonchalantly nodding towards the harbour. "He and Mr. Ballard just came here to get the glasses out of the tool-box. Glasses. Something. I don't know."

I think I laughed at the fantasy of Ballard and Harry elbow to elbow leaning over the balustrade to peer through glasses into the dark sea whereon a ship came floating like a bright star. Glasses. Something.

I ran towards the empty terrace.

Empty? Well, it was almost empty. You know how it looks at seven o'clock on a winter's evening when the first night chill is still in the air. The chairs are all taken in. The *habitués* of the afternoon are gone. The bright lift stands empty at the far end, nearest the railroad station, invisible below. The gas lamps throw a sort of twilight on shrubs and pavement. Sometimes you see two gendarmes pacing up and down. But I didn't see them that evening. Not that moment.

And I saw no one leaning over the balustrade to watch the bright ship come near and nearer.

The men I saw stood facing each other about twenty paces apart. Harry had his back to me, but I could see Ballard more distinctly. He seemed to be smiling, and there was an object which hung in his right hand. I suppose he didn't see me. For he said:—

"You can do the counting if you want to, Keynes. It will be one, two, three, and fire."

Harry began: "Well, one——"

I seized his arm. I twisted the pistol out of his hand and put it in my pocket.

Ballard laughed.

"Stage stuff," he said. "I didn't suppose my young friend would go through with it."

Harry made a leap and freed himself. But he stepped into a blinding shaft of light as the ship down there in the dark harbour threw her searchlight over Monte Carlo. Being just outside the range of it, I could see the two blinded men: Harry tense and panting, Ballard still holding his pistol and his easy pose.

"Ah, the spot light," said Ballard, "for our amateur theatricals."

IT *was* theatrical, I suppose. The façade of the Casino, lit to the twin towers, looked like a gigantic backdrop. Then a flock of pigeons, startled from sleep, whirred out of the elaborate cornices and circled wildly about in the artificial day.

It was one of those pigeons which struck Ballard. Ballard himself may not have known what it was. But I saw it—a blue pigeon. It came down with beating wings and hit Ballard in the face; and Ballard, as any man would in the circumstances, struck at it with both hands.

His pistol glittered in the strong light and cracked strangely against the silence. I don't think I believed it when I saw him sink first to his knees and then fall back. The light had gone suddenly.

Two gendarmes came running up from nowhere.

"He's dead," said one of them.

And so he was.

It was rather a strange death. In a way, you might say a pigeon was the cause of it. But I make nothing fantastic out of that. I make nothing of the scratches on Ballard's face where a blinded and frightened bird had struck with wing and claw. And as to the colour of the feathers, I think there must have been a thousand blue pigeons at Monte Carlo.

The Peculiar Temptation of PETER JACKSON, CIGAR MERCHANT

By GILBERT FRANKAU

Illustrated by S. BRIAULT

I.

IT is not without reluctance that I break a long silence about my friend Peter Jackson, sometime senior partner in P. Jackson and Company, Cigar Importers, and Chairman of Nirvana, Limited, manufacturers of high-grade cigarettes. Indeed, it is only because so very many of my correspondents seem anxious to know what has happened to that "temporary" gunner officer, since he was invalided out of "The Regiment" and became a co-operative farmer somewhere among those hills which slope down to Henley-on-Thames, that I narrate this incident in his post-war career.

On the whole, then—my many correspondents will be glad to know—that post-war career, though difficult, has not been a failure. "Tebbits-Jackson, Limited" (you will remember, perhaps, how our Mr. Jackson took Harry Tebbits, the neighbouring farmer, into partnership?) is as prosperous as any agricultural concern can hope to be in England. Prize pigs grunt in Peter's sties. Prize cows low in his sheds. Wilkins, his blind poultryman, has more than a thousand black Leghorns in his keeping. Sid Dyson still does a good bit of timber felling; and ex-Corporal Hankins, he of the artificial leg, is to-day

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in charge of no less than four delivery vans which supply eggs, poultry, fruit, and vegetables direct to housewives as far away as Maidenhead and Cookham Dene.

Driver Garton, too—our friend's old batman—is still at "Sunflowers"; and many more ex-artillery men, all sharing in his profits from the farm. Nor, despite all their difficulties, has our Mr. Jackson—"Daddy" to two flapper daughters and a boy of seven, who will have to be sent to a decent private school in a year or two—yet fallen out of love with his wife, the tall, blonde, dignified, and now nearly forty-year-old Patricia.

Yet sometimes—especially when his cousin, Francis Gordon, now a "celebrated author," leaves Glen Cottage to secure yet more American dollars for his American wife—"P. J." feels a little lonely; and sometimes—especially when he looks at "Peter the Fourth" and wonders how the deuce he is going to find enough English fivers to send him to Eton—"P. J." cannot help regretting those pre-war days when, pitting his brains against the Schornsteins and the Elkinses and all the rest of the cigar trade, he made at least double as much as he can ever hope to earn out of the stubborn land.

And as it so happened, such a mood of regret was fairly vivid in our Mr. Jackson's mind when, at about half-past eight of a frosty spring morning, he came back to a slightly shabby "Sunflowers" from his usual pow-wow with Harry Tebbits, to find Patricia and "Peter the Fourth" already at breakfast in their sitting-hall, and on the table a handwritten envelope which, turned over, revealed the astonishing superscription, "Beresford and Beresford, St. Mary Axe."

"Why the dickens are *they* writing to me?" he thought, his grey eyes darkening a little as he bent his stocky figure over the table and reached for a knife. And "P. J.'s" eyes darkened still further, and his hand fidgeted at his "toothbrushed" moustache when, having slit the envelope, he read, in Maurice Beresford's handwriting, "It's years since I last saw you. Are you doing anything on the fifteenth? We have a special dinner on that evening; and quite a lot of your old friends in the trade seem to think it won't be complete unless you're with us. I've a new flat—Ninety-nine, Mount Street; and can easily put you up for the night."

"And what do you think of that?" asked our Mr. Jackson, handing over the letter to his wife.

Patricia, helping "Peter the Fourth" to his egg, took quite a while to peruse the crabbed, precise words; and watching her, Peter remembered how, long ago in the war-years, she had taken one of her spites to "that horrid, cynical little man," Maurice Beresford. So that it was rather a surprise when, perusal finished, she said, smiling at him, "I think I'd go if I were you. You haven't been up to Town since the last Divisional Dinner. And besides, it'll give you a chance of hurrying on those new chicken-houses."

All the same—and although, regretful moods apart, a good dinner and a bed at Maurice's flat seemed distinctly alluring—Peter, by now grown very wise in husband-hood, did not rush his fences.

"I'll think it over," he said. "You're sure *you* wouldn't mind?"

"Mind?" laughed Patricia. "With spring-cleaning to be done!"

She left the matter there; and Peter, having kissed her, went back to his jobs. His jobs that morning happened to be rather trivial; and by lunch time the regretful mood was sharp as a thorn.

That afternoon, too, all his men seemed in a conspiracy to annoy him. Driver Garton groused about the oats; blind Wilkins about the poultry-food; ex-Corporal Hankins about the petrol. While, to cap all, Sid Dyson, not satisfied with profit-sharing, wanted his wages raising; and Harry Tebbits (usually submissive enough) fought for three-quarters of a grudging hour against putting up new cottages on the Arlesfield Road.

"You and your ex-service men," rumbled Harry Tebbits. "Beant the bungalows good enough for 'em?"

Peter, in the end, got his own way about the cottages; but his partner's "You and your ex-service men" seemed to sum up the whole trouble of the day.

"This place is turning into a charity institution," he thought; and that night, as they sat, supper over—she knitting "Peter the Fourth" a jumper suit, and he cleaning his old rabbit gun with a four-by-two—said as much to his wife.

But all Patricia said was, "You want a day off, my dear. Have you accepted that invitation yet? Because if you have, *I'd* better see to your tail-coat."

For it had got a bit frayed in the silk, had that evening tail-coat of our Mr. Jackson's; and so had the smoking jacket he was wearing—and both of these exiguous facts, one feels, assumed an exaggerated importance as he answered Beresford's note.

II.

THERE is no need—fortunately for the printer—to devote more than a passing remark to the next week. "P. J." just went on with his farming; and Patricia just

went on watching him, as she always did watch him when what she called his "wish-I-were-back-at-the-office" mood was at its height.

This time his "wish-I-were-back-at-the-office" mood seemed no worse than usual. He was slightly less even-tempered, perhaps; and slightly more dictatorial; and slightly more inclined—at nights, when he came back mired from his riding or his tramping—to sit late over his complicated system of account books. But otherwise he gave her no cause for anxiety; nor did she mention the affair to her father when that distinguished nerve-specialist (now a baronet, by the way) drove his new Rolls down to them on the Sunday afternoon.

"Peter's awfully fit, pater," was all she confided. "It's marvellous how he's got over his shell-shock. Why—he hasn't had a touch of it for years."

"You want a day off," said Patricia. Because if you have, *I'd*

Yet—because shell-shock is one of those queer mental ailments which linger on in even the best of minds—it is just possible that there was something the tiniest mite abnormal about our Mr. Jackson's thoughts when, at four o'clock in the afternoon of a rainy fifteenth of April, he settled himself in the corner of an extravagant first-class carriage from Reading to London.

He was thinking about life, you see—always a dangerous speculation. And life, stuck away in the country, seemed, all on a sudden, rather dull. Even though a man had the best of wives and three of the jolliest children in the world, he needed a bit of excitement. And what excitement could there be in basic slag, or in cauliflowers, in buying a new chicken-house, or selling

" Have you accepted that invitation yet ? better see to your tail-coat."

an old pig ? And besides, besides—what about those " damned ex-service men " with their constant grouses at their cushy jobs ?

Call it a touch of shell-shock if you like. But the fact remains that the nearer our Mr. Jackson got to London, the more of a city cigar merchant and the less of a co-operative farmer did he become.

" I'm a blithering idiot," he kept telling himself. " Co-operation's a farce. What's the good of bothering oneself about what men did in the war nowadays ? The fact that a fellow nearly had his head blown off on the Somme in 1916 doesn't entitle him to share in *my* profits to-day. And, anyway, there won't be any profits this year —not if those blight-hawks of mine don't do a bit more work."

From which, very naturally, our Mr. Jackson's mind began to flirt with his mercantile past : and was still in that semi-amorous condition by the time, precisely five-twenty-five, that he made his way out of Paddington Station and told a taxi-driver, a faint parade rasp in his voice, " Ninety-nine, Mount Street. And get a move on, please."

Ninety-nine, Mount Street, reached in rain-drizzle, disclosed itself as a small, red-fronted block of bachelor flats ; the automatic lift of which, functioning easily, soon decanted a countryfied-looking Peter and a worn if still Bond-Street-looking suit-case before a highly-polished mahogany door, above whose electric bell shone a highly-polished brass plate stamped in black letters, " Mr. Maurice Beresford."

From behind that polished mahogany Peter's ring produced, first, a sly man-servant ; and a second later Maurice

Beresford himself, eyeglass in eye, grinning as he held out his hand.

The years—it seemed—had dealt rather hardly with Beresford. Whiter, balder, thinner, the little man no longer looked the miniature "nut" to whom Peter had sold his family business, but an oldish fellow, lonely, and a trifle pathetic. Yet neither his voice nor his manner had altered; and the monocle, as of yore, dropped from his eye as he said, "Hullo, Peter! And how's pigs, or is it poultry, in Berkshire?"

"Oh, not too bad, Maurice," countered our Mr. Jackson, still with his past. "And how are cabbage-leaves in St. Mary Axe?"

"Might be better," began Maurice Beresford; and then, somewhat quickly, "Might be worse, though. We're more or less together, nowadays. Hence these dinners! No good cutting prices on a falling market—especially with *you* out of the trade."

They talked "shop" for a second or so. Then Maurice's man-servant, having asked for and obtained the key, went off with Peter's bag; while the little man himself led the way into a large and lavishly furnished sitting-room, the cocktail tray on its walnut dining-table flanked with various boxes of different-sized cigars.

"Martini?" asked Maurice. "A 'Petit Corona' before we dress?"

"Thanks,"

The dry Martini and the "Petit Corona" were both excellent; and, enjoying the unaccustomed luxuries, while Maurice continued to explain the purpose of "these monthly dinners," Peter's flirtation with the past became very nearly matrimonial. There had been so much excitement in the past—and so much *money*—so very much more money than one could ever hope to make out of co-operative farming. Which last thought, our Mr. Jackson's grey eyes confirmed with every glance they took about the room. Maurice, of course, being a bachelor, always had done himself fairly well. But this place just left Maurice's old flat in Jermyn Street standing.

"Must pay a hell of a rent," Peter decided, accepting a second cocktail. "Six hundred a year at the least. Probably seven."

AND the cigar-merchant element in our Mr. Jackson continued active after he and Maurice had separated to dress. The dressing-room in which he now found himself, and the Vitrolite-walled bathroom beyond, put his own little room at Sunflowers and the bathroom he shared with his wife and the children to shame. His tail-coat, carefully laid out by the man-servant under bright lights on the bright silk eiderdown of the bed, seemed shabby despite all Patricia's ministrations. The patent shoes in front of the gas fire were cracked at the toecaps. His shaving-kit had rusted; and as, having shaved, he pulled down the free end of his white tie under a slightly-frayed shirt-front, he could not help visualizing Smith, his old parlourmaid, and the general comforts of his pre-war house in Lowndes Square.

"If only I hadn't sold out to Maurice," he mused, fastening his white waistcoat and shrugging his broadened shoulders, not without difficulty, into that shabby tail-coat, "I'd have been in this 'ring' he keeps on talking about—and there'd have been no difficulty about sending Peter the Fourth to Eton."

So Peter's musing continued until, just as he was lighting himself a gasper from the gold cigarette-case which Patricia had insisted on lending him for the night, Maurice entered, a very glossy top-hat on his head and a very white silk muffler round his neck, saying, "Come along, Enefer. We don't want to be late."

It took our Mr. Jackson, who had forgotten Maurice's slang, a good five minutes to translate the word Enefer; and by the time he had remembered the name to be that of a certain Hebraic undertaker, his old competitor had seated him in the soft depths of a very large and very silent Daimler limousine.

"Is your brother Charlie going to be there to-night?" he asked, more for the sake of making conversation than from any real interest.

"No." Maurice hesitated. "Charlie isn't very well these days."

"Nothing serious, I hope?" Peter, rusty though his business brain was after its years of rustication, could not help noticing the unusual tone.

"I'm afraid it is rather serious. Charlie hasn't been to the office for the best part of three months."

"I'm sorry," said Peter: and after that, fell silent; while the other thought: "Poor old Charlie. I wonder how long he'll last? Dash it, I've got to find a young partner somewhere or other. Or sell out and live on five per cent."

III.

VARIOUS proverbs, one of them far from polite to a distinguished gathering, might serve to explain our Mr. Jackson's mental agitation as he accompanied Maurice Beresford past a big commissionaire, through a revolving door, and down a long corridor, at the end of which a pert page-boy put the pert question, "Cigar Importers' Dinner?" But Beresford's sarcastic "Nasty jar, that; I always

thought you and I looked like members of the old aristocracy," restored calm; and by the time the pair of them joined "the old crowd," the old crowd could not see any great difference between this Peter and the nineteen-fourteen Peter who had been sole agent for Beckmann's.

"The old crowd" took him—metaphorically speaking—to their white-shirted bosoms; and after another cocktail, the years seemed to roll away.

It was good to be back with these people, he felt; good to see Charlie Elkins again, and Tony Harris, and young Shortlands (formerly Schornstein), who still limped from the war. But old Schornstein was dead; and many other recollected faces missing; and many new-comers round the cocktail table; and presently, after they had sat down four-and-twenty to a longish menu, our Mr. Jackson began to feel himself a little isolated, almost like a ghost at their feast.

That feeling, however, passed with his third glass of fizz; and once the brandy came, and the coffee, and two dozen hoppoles of cigars fumed blue-grey round the cleared cloth, he grew as interested in the general conversation as the pre-war senior partner in Peter Jackson and Company might have been; even to interjecting an occasional remark, an occasional criticism.

The talk (Time mellows, but does not alter, the cigar trade) was not without its acrimonies. Peter heard the old "spats" exchanged in the old jargon; saw the old rivalries break out on the old faces; and enjoyed every minute of the thing, down to that last argument—about the alleged similarity of two size-names—during which Elkins, his smooth cheeks creasing as they always had creased under any irritation, told young Mordecai, "My dear boy, when you've had as much experience in this business as I have, you'll know that *both* those front-marks were used by the factory as long ago as nineteen hundred and three."

On the whole, though, arguments were at a discount; and as the long talk came to an end, Peter—perpending its main issue, a joint advertising scheme to which all present were pledged in sums that would purchase many hundred chicken-houses—could not restrain a distinct envy towards these men, each of whom (though each pretended, as they always had pretended, poverty) could afford the luxuries to which he himself had so long been stranger.

"*I* can't afford champagne dinners," he thought. "*I* can't afford Daimler limousines. It'll be all I can manage—and that'll mean selling out a bit of War Loan—to give the lad a decent education."

And this envy, this reversion to type, grew rapidly as the party rose from the table. None of these men—Peter felt—had any real troubles. Their futures, and the future of their business, were assured. The war hadn't hurt *them*. *They* hadn't lost half their capital. *They* weren't stuck away in the country, trying to turn grousing ex-soldiers into efficient farmhands. And as one after another of the old crowd said good-bye to him, his "wish-I-were-back-at-the-office" mood took complete command of our Mr. Jackson's brain.

"Damn it all," he caught himself thinking. "Damn it all, I *was* an ass to let Maurice have Jackson's. Miss Macpherson *could* have carried on till the war was over. And once *I* got back into the saddle, I'd have made just as much money as any of 'em."

Accordingly—blame the remnants of shell-shock again, rather than the circumstance that his head was not quite the alcohol-proof engine of the war-days—it is a fact that when, the last good-byes spoken, Maurice Beresford suggested "Landi's," our Mr. Jackson had the impulse to refuse.

"Landi's," said he. "And what the devil is Landi's?"

"Night club," answered Maurice. "Just round the corner. Can't go to bed yet. Why, it's barely eleven."

SO eleven-fifteen found them seated—Peter rather silent—at a little table in the corner of that none-too-reputable haunt.

"We'll just have another half-bottle," said Maurice, "and a chicken sandwich. How did you enjoy yourself? The trade's settled down a good deal, don't you think? Not so competitive as it used to be. I don't mind telling you, between you and me and the gate-post, that *our* average gross profit last year was twenty-four per cent."

"Twenty-four per cent.," repeated our Mr. Jackson, and once again—though his grey eyes seemed concentrated on the dance-picture which a sudden burst of music conjured up for them—he cursed himself for a fool.

"Pretty girl, that!" went on Maurice, purposely breaking off the conversation. "And there's no need for an introduction, either. Wish I were your age. How's the wife, by the way?"

"Thanks," said Peter. "She's very well."

He watched the girl for a second or two; and she smiled at him as she danced by. But the smile went unregarded. "That sort of thing" never had interested our Mr. Jackson; and besides, he remembered quite enough of Maurice Beresford's methods to know that the expression "between you

Maurice screwed his dropped monocle back into his eye-socket. "How much do you want me to suggest?" "My dear chap," answered Peter, "I can't be buyer and seller too."

and me and the gate-post" was never without its special significance.

But what the significance of that particular expression, used at this particular juncture, portended, our Mr. Jackson had no more idea than the man in the moon, until—after endless finessing—Maurice Beresford finished the last remnant of his chicken sandwich; swigged off the last drop of his Moët; wiped his eyeglass with his pocket-handkerchief; lit himself a cigarette, and said, leaning across the table so that his words might not travel to their neighbours:—

"I've got a confession to make to you, Peter. I didn't invite you up to spend to-night with me for 'Auld Lang Syne' or anything of that sort. I don't believe in sentiment. I believe in bank-balances. And though I don't know—and I'm not asking you to tell me—how your bank-balance stands since you sold me a devilish good business and took to poultry farming, I do know enough about farming to under-

stand that it isn't exactly a gold-mine. So what *I* want to do—though, of course, cigar-broking isn't a gold-mine either—is to make you a little suggestion."

Maurice Beresford, his Moët not having outrun his discretion, stopped there; and for a full thirty seconds Peter watched him in silence across the ice bucket.

"Suggestion?" prompted Peter at last.

"Exactly. A suggestion!" Maurice grinned. "It's just an idea of mine. The fact of the matter is, Peter, that I'm getting old, and Charlie—well"—the grin vanished—"poor Charlie can't last much longer. Result: Beresford and Beresford need a partner. Somebody with a bit of capital and a bit of go. Somebody who understands the business, too. Somebody——"

A cabaret turn, performed to slow music and in semi-darkness, interrupted Beresford's monologue; and when the lights went up again, he could see that there was no need for him to resume.

"Got me?" he asked; and Peter—one half of his brain convinced for refusal, yet the other urging, "Don't be in a hurry. Business is business. He may be able to make it worth your while"—nodded; nodded again, and carefully flicked the ash from his cigar, before replying, "Every man's got his price, Maurice. Go on!"

"You're open to an offer, then?"

"I didn't say that. But I'm open to consider your—your suggestion."

"Good." Maurice Beresford screwed his dropped monocle back into his eye-socket. "How much do you want me to suggest?"

"My dear chap"—not for nothing does our Mr. Jackson's family tree trace him back to the Hebraic "Miraflores"—"I can't be buyer and seller too."

"But I said I wanted somebody with a bit of capital."

"Quite so. Question is: How much capital?"

"Well—let's call it ten thousand."

"All right"—to the honour of his poker-training, Peter never batted an eyelash—"let's call it that. What's the interest on it—and what's to be my percentage of the total profits?"

And on that, with no more finessing, Maurice Beresford came plump out with a cut-and-dried proposition which—though his eyelids remained untwitching—made Peter's grey pupils stare, and little drops of perspiration break out under his armpits.

"Six per cent. on my ten thousand," he thought. "A hundred a month salary—and a fifth of the net profits into the bargain. Why—good God!—if B. and B.'s profits are anything like what they used to be, that'll mean well over three thousand a year."

IV.

IT is written in the original history of our Mr. Jackson how—and for many years—money stood to him not as mere coin to spend or save, but as the measure of success in his career. So that if Maurice Beresford—instead of having been a rather tired old man, anxious for new blood in a rather tired old business—had been Old Nick himself, he could not have found a more cunning temptation than that cut-and-dried proposition which he elaborated (elaboration being the habit of the cigar trade) all the way home in his luxurious Daimler to his luxurious flat.

To say that our Mr. Jackson was flattered is to put the thing at its mildest. To say that he was altogether above himself, represents far less than the facts. He simply couldn't sleep for considering that proposition; and when, next morning, over a late and odorous breakfast, the tempter gave him, from a rough memorandum obviously prepared for the purpose, Beresford and Beresford's average earnings since the war, only one thought—that he must consult Patricia—prevented him from accepting on the spot. Ten thousand pounds, all said and done, wouldn't take much raising; he had at least five in War Loan; and his father-in-law ought to lend him the rest, until he'd sold out his interest in the farm.

And once Maurice—satisfied with his "Let you know in forty-eight hours, then: after I've talked it over with my wife"—had left for the City, even that scruple disappeared.

"Pat's bound to see it the same way I do," thought our Mr. Jackson. "Hang it all, it wouldn't be fair to Peter the Fourth if we didn't accept"; and so thinking, chicken-houses forgotten, he decided on a walk.

"You'll be coming back for your bag, then, sir?" asked the sly man-servant.

"Yes. About lunch-time," he answered, not forgetful of a tip.

Peter Jackson, once out of doors, walked slowly along Mount Street towards Hyde Park. Yesterday's rain had passed over. The sky above his head was clear. And his own future, too, seemed clear: to chuck farming and return to the trade. Money apart—though money *was* money, and the man who refused a better job a fool—trade gave one *scope*, a chance to use one's abilities.

Nevertheless, once he reached the Park, that future blurred a little; and the tiniest particle of doubt, of uncertainty, edged its way into Peter Jackson's mind. Somehow or other, everything in Hyde Park—the grass of it, and the daffodils of it, even the horses in Rotten Row and the dogs that followed

the perambulators—seemed a little unfresh, a little jaded. But he had never been an introspective person; and, "Stuffy place, Town," was the only thought these unfresh, jaded things conveyed to him, as, lured on by the memories of his childhood, he reached the end of the Row.

Beyond the Row lie Kensington Gardens; and through the Gardens our Mr. Jackson, at a soldierly stride, his head up and his arms swinging, reached the Round Pond. Children were boat-sailing by the Round Pond; and he stood to watch them. The sight cheered him; seemed to confirm decision. Stuffy or not, Town was no bad place for kiddies; and—for the sake of his son—he must come back to Town, let his farm and his ex-service men shift for themselves.

"I've done enough for *them*," he thought; yet even so knew decision oscillating; the future still unclear. It was a big step, this coming back to London. He mustn't rush it. And besides, Pat mightn't approve, mightn't want to leave Sunflowers.

"But that'd be absurd," went on his thoughts; and presently, after he had left the Round Pond, Maurice Beresford's words, "I don't believe in sentiment; I believe in bank-balances," recurred to him.

"Maurice is right," he argued with himself, stopping for a moment to watch a gardener forking leaves in the long border that leads back into Hyde Park. "This thing's got to be done."

And after that he walked on again, more quickly now, his "back-to-the-office" mood at zenith, the cigar merchant dominant in him, the better Peter asleep. All said and done, wouldn't he be happier as a cigar merchant? Wasn't he wasting his life, wasting his brains, wasting his energy with this co-operative farming of his; with those few dozen ex-artillerymen who weren't even grateful for their maximum wage? And wasn't Patricia, too, wasting her life? Must that white neck which had once worn his pearl necklace be for ever bent over knitting needles, and that graceful body over the domestic duties which the servants had done for him in Lowndes Square?

"And besides," he told himself, "it isn't just the money. It's the success of the thing. Being asked to come back into the old business." And after that—for, always, his old failure to make good in the tobacco trade had rankled a little—the peculiar temptation of Peter Jackson, cigar merchant, blinded him with a maze of dreams. The past, the present, vanished; and only the future showed, very radiant, to his dreaming mind.

Lost in that future, he turned out of the Park. Still lost in it, he made his way behind the Barracks; and so came—not knowing in the least how he had got there—across Sloane Street and into sight of his old home.

His old home in Lowndes Square had changed hands several times since he sold it to that Belgian *embusqué*, M. van Woumen. It had been newly painted, too, and draped with modern curtains; looked somehow cheerier than of yore. He stopped a while to gaze at it; and as he did so a big car drove up, and out of the car, latch-key and parcels in hand, stepped a little woman in expensive furs. "That's what Pat'll be doing again," said his dreams. "Shopping at Harrod's. Coming home in her own car."

And false dreams were still strong on him when he turned from that pleasant home; and began to find his way, through the old Belgravian side-streets, towards Grosvenor Gardens and Birdcage Walk. Twice, before he reached Grosvenor Gardens, he stopped to consider how he should word his acceptance to Beresford; and once—just as he reached the ladies' entrance of the Wellington Club—that tiny particle of doubt, of uncertainty, again edged itself into his mind.

But there was no real doubt, and no real uncertainty in his mind, until that moment when, the Wellington behind him, he caught sight of The Gun.

THE Gun, Our Gun, was new to him; had been unveiled since his last visit to Town; and for a second or so, looking on it where its stone muzzle lifted above the sap-full tree branches, our Mr. Jackson experienced the strangest, most petulant resentment. For it spoke to him of war, did Our Gun; dumbly, yet fretting his dreams. And even as he looked on it, it halted him, stood him to attention in his tracks.

"Howitzer," he thought. "Nine-point-two How. Plenty of 'em on the Somme."

Then dreams had him again; and he walked on, subconsciously trying to avoid the tremendous symbolism, the tremendous majesty of that Memorial which a gunner made for all gunners, lest they forget. But the Memorial, Our Memorial, would not let him by; and after a pace or so, still muzzy with his own prospects, he crossed the roadway to look upon The Subaltern who fronts The Gun.

The Subaltern—green bronze against a grey as of pill-box concrete—might have been Peter's better self. But Peter did not see that massive figure for himself. He saw it for his friend Bromley—for Bromley who had died in Trônes Wood. And the sight fretted him, even as the first sight of The Gun had fretted him. Because he did not wish to remember Bromley or Trônes Wood—to-day.

"Here was a Lordly Fellowship of Death."

"Harold used to carry his cloak like that," thought continued, "and wear his helmet like that, and those field-service boots."

Peter Jackson tried to put thought away. Yet thought grew on him; and with thought, fear. What was wrong with those dreams he had just been dreaming? Did Bromley know? But Bromley's face spoke

no word with him ; and even while he stared at it, it seemed to change, to become not one face but many—the faces of many such his better self had known. And now no more thought came to Peter Jackson—only a strange tingling that ran from spine to feet.

Others were examining the Memorial. But he was not aware of those others, nor of the peace-time omnibuses that went rumbling by. He was aware only of that tingling ; and of his feet moving him, almost as a man's feet move him through thick mud, round the base of this gigantic pedestal ; and of shrivelled wreaths.

For now the years rolled away once more ; and false dreams shrivelled as the wreaths had shrivelled ; and when he looked up again it was to see That Driver who is all the drivers who ever served a gun-team in the Flanders muck.

That Driver had draped himself in his ground-sheet. His right hand grasped his whip ; his left a bridoon bit. His helmeted head was bowed, as Peter's own head had been bowed, against the driving of the rain. And at his whip-hand, graven as on concrete, Peter saw the figures of his horses, the figures of his mates.

They laboured, did That Driver's mates ; man-handling the eighteen-pounder forward —forward through the muck. And the wheel-horses of the team were rearing—rearing to a shell-burst as the driver fell backward against the tautened reins. And now in Peter's mind, too, was a labour, a rearing against the reins of Fate.

For in That Driver's face, also, are many faces. And to Peter they were the faces of men living, even of those ex-artillery men who still served under him ; of Corporal Hankins ; and of Driver Garton, and of blind Wilkins, who fed the clucking Leghorns in the early dawn.

But those faces, too, were dumb ; spoke not with him ; only waited, dumb as The Gun's self waited, on his will. They could not say to him, as they say to many, " What of us ? Would you desert us—you who served with us—you whom we obeyed ? " Because now, all abruptly, thought was back with him ; and all his mind was with the future of his son. And now the future of his son was as a whip to him ; as a whip-lash while he reared against the reins. Let dreams pass ! A man must do his immediate duty. And, surely, his own immediate duty lay towards his own flesh.

" I owe it to the boy," thought Peter Jackson ; and so thinking—almost his better self again, now that false dreams were by—ceased to stare at That Driver who is all our drivers ; and turned away from him ; and so stood, all on a sudden as it seemed, in the presence of that prone bronze figure who is all Our Gunner Dead.

The figure lay where he had fallen—his feet upturned, his blankets over his rigid body, his helmet shielding his face. Above him, sculptured in white marble, Peter saw the arms of The Regiment, flanked high by the one word " France." And below him, all about that hard couch whereon he lay fallen, ran other words : noble words which graved themselves—slowly, letter by letter, as the stone-mason's chisel had graved them on the granite—on to those hard tablets which were Peter Jackson's unintrospective, unreceptive mind.

" Here was a Fellowship." " Here was a Lordly Fellowship." " Here was a Lordly Fellowship of Death."

And even while those noble words were graving themselves on to those hard tablets, temptation fell away ; and Peter looked—as only the unintrospective can look when their hour comes to them—on the stark Face of Truth. And the Face, for all the starkness of it, seemed very beautiful to him ; and after the words were fully graven, it seemed to him that they spoke together of another yet lordlier fellowship ; the fellowship of an after-life, lived not for money but for usefulness to one's kind.

" Let this be your task," said the Face. " And the task of the son who comes after you : Service, even though they give you no praise for the service, to these men who, without leaders, are but children in this present they have won."

And Peter said to the Face, " So be it. I, and my son after me, will serve them, and their sons after them, until we die."

V.

BUT because Peter is still only our Mr. Peter Jackson, dumb as the other English are when their hour is on them, and a thoroughly average man, all this—when at long last he turned away from the Face—appeared altogether too highfalutin for everyday speech.

So that all he said about his decision in his letter to Maurice Beresford can be epitomized in its final sentence, " Taking things all round, I think I'd better stay where I am " ; and almost all he told Patricia of the reasons for that decision, in the words, " I'm glad they put up something that does remind a fellow of the old days," with which he closed his description of the truest war-memorial in the whole wide world.

Yet because Patricia Jackson is also of the fellowship—and of another fellowship, that lordliest of all mortal fellowships, which men call Love—she, as not Maurice Beresford, understood.

THE HUMOURS OF WALKING

By

GEORGE CUMMINGS

World's Champion Walker.

Mr. George Cummings.

ONE would not, upon first consideration, suspect a very grey-haired man of fifty-two of being capable of phenomenal walking feats. I answer to that description—people who meet me for the first time refer to me behind my back as " that old fellow "—but it is a fact that I am world's champion at the game, and as recently as a few months ago broke the hour's record, covering nearly eight and a quarter miles in that time. I beat the previous record held by Meagher, an American, by forty-three and a half yards.

In such circumstances of physical deception on my part it may be imagined that quite amusing incidents happen to me. Strangers can't credit, in view of my appearance, my walking powers, and will not be convinced until they see and believe. Arguments lead to wagers, with one invariable result—the " old man " astonishes the sceptics.

There is one occasion which I cannot look back upon without a smile, and which might have made a plot for a W. W. Jacobs story. I was due to train for a certain walking event, and for this purpose went into the country. On the journey down by rail I remembered I had a friend living near one of the stations I would pass, so I decided to get out and give him a call. This I did, and had the pleasant surprise of finding him at the station with his car awaiting his wife, who did not turn up by that train. My friend insisted I should accompany him to his home and await the arrival of his wife. We got into the car and were going along the highway when we came upon a farmer measuring the road with a speedometer attached to his bicycle.

He was so intent upon reading the instrument that he did not notice us. When we had passed, my friend confided to me that the farmer was a cunning old rascal. There

had, it seems, been an argument in the local inn about the distance between that hostelry and another.

"Old Smart is measuring the distance now," my friend said, "so that when the subject crops up again he will catch someone by betting."

Thinking no more of the matter, we were soon enjoying a cup of tea with a couple of boiled eggs each and enough boiled ham between us to feed a family, from which it will be evident I am no faddist in diet; only when I am engaged in a walking match do I abstain from solids, taking milk, and maybe beer, for I am not a teetotaller. I do abstain from smoking, for I know it is bad for me.

After a chat over old times, my friend and I adjourned to the local inn for a game of billiards. As soon as we entered it was obvious to us that a heated argument was under way. I heard someone mention seven miles, and at once realized the old topic had cropped up again. Just then I had an idea. Taking my friend outside before we had been seen, I asked him if there were any good walkers in the village.

"There are two or three," he replied, "but none of them could beat six miles an hour."

"Well, then, listen," I said. "You go in and tell that old crook that it's not more than six miles."

"Not me," my friend rejoined; "he has measured it and knows to a yard what distance it is, and will plank a fiver on the counter in no time and want to bet me. I should have to cover it or else look foolish, and he's sure to win in any case."

"You are going to cover his fiver," I said, "and what is more you, and not the old fox, will win it. Now, you must not know me. I'm going in there on my own. You come along later and bring my attaché case with you and leave it in the billiard-room. No one in there is likely to know me and everything should work splendidly. The plan is this: you say you don't believe it's more than six miles, and when the argument gets hot you can turn on the farmer chap and say, 'Well, at any rate, I bet there's a man in this room who could walk it in the hour.' No one is likely to think you are referring to the old gentleman in the corner, and, besides, they think you don't know him. They will think you mean one of the locals, and they will all know the capabilities of each other."

My friend agreed and everything passed off as arranged. No sooner had my companion entered the bar than he was asked his opinion. This he gave most emphatically. "It's no more than six," he said.

The farmer took him up immediately. "I say it's seven; I bet it's seven."

"Seven be blowed!" rejoined my friend; "why, I'll match a man in this bar to walk it in an hour."

The other fellow must have had his fiver in his hand, so quickly was it placed upon the counter. My friend produced another and the ten pounds was handed over to the landlord, who there and then put the bet in black and white and read it out to both parties.

All eyes were now turned on my companion. Who was he going to pick as his champion? The excitement was intense.

"Here is my man," my friend said, indicating me. Had a farmer admitted he had had a good year it could not have caused so much astonishment. Speaking to me, he said, "I have matched you to walk from the Red Lion to the Pig and Whistle in an hour or under."

Pretending to be taken by surprise, I looked up from my paper without any sign of recognition of my friend. The other chap, who had no doubt at first got a bit of a shock, must have felt reassured on seeing my grey hairs. He saw me hesitate, and quickly butted in with the remark that he would claim forfeit if I refused to walk it.

"That settles it," I exclaimed. "I'll try, anyway."

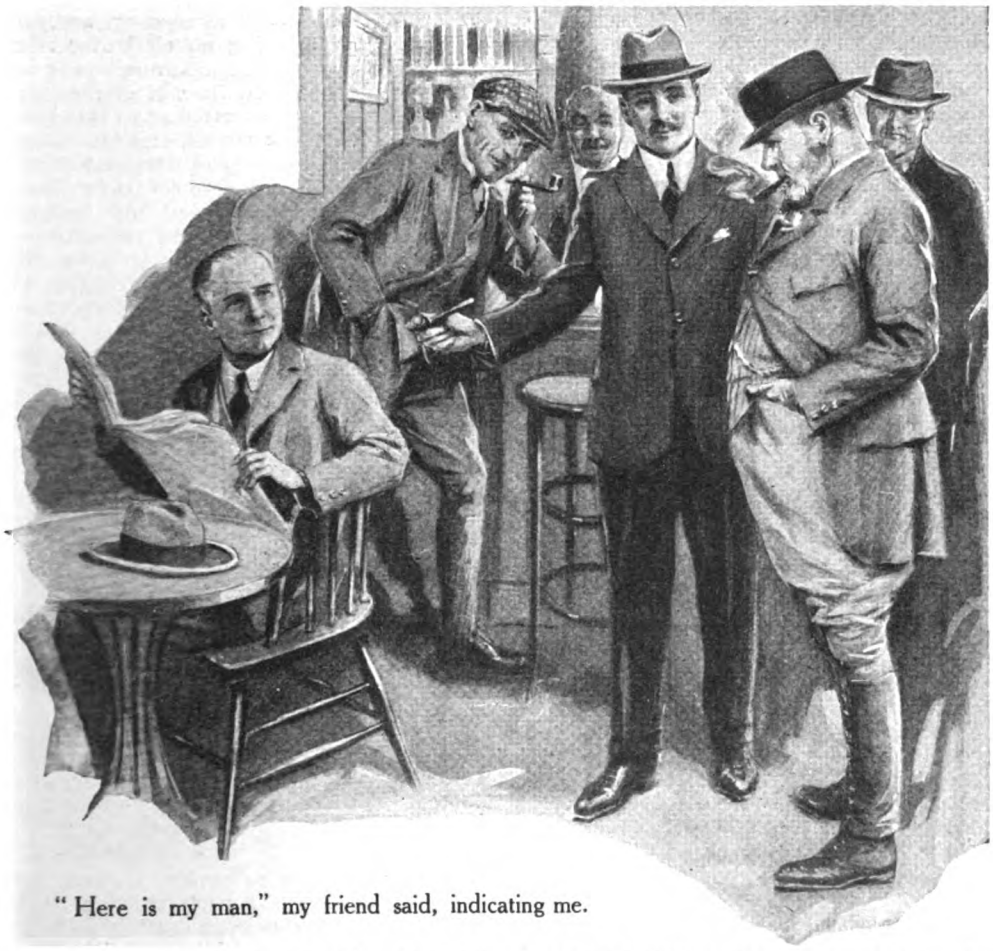
I WENT away and got dressed in shorts and jersey. The news of the bet spread like wild-fire, and every kind of conveyance in the district was brought into use to follow me on the walk and carry spectators.

I set out in good style and had little difficulty in completing the distance—seven miles—in fifty-six minutes. And from that day to this not even the poorest inhabitant, to whom my friend presented the five-pound note he won, can get out of my acquaintance any answer to the question he is always met with at the Red Lion: "Tell us, Tom, who was that walking chap?"

One day I had been doing some strenuous work on the Paddington Recreation Ground and must have reduced myself by at least four pounds. Just as I was coming off, thinking how thin I must be looking, an impudent little boy greeted me with the remark, "Have you finished for to-day, fatty?"

But he did not take my breath away nearly so much as did two urchins whose conversation I overheard while walking at that same track. They were observing me with interest, when one turned to the other and said, "That fellow's eighty!" "Garn!" the other replied, "he's no more'n seventy!"

The first long-distance walk I ever did was from Hartlepool to Hull, a distance of one hundred and one miles. I have since



"Here is my man," my friend said, indicating me.

made various long-distance walks, the most notable being from London to Edinburgh, concerning which I shall speak later. I was a boy of twenty-three when I made that tramp from Hartlepool. Being something of a boxer, I had gone there for a fight, which for some reason was postponed, and I then took it into my head to walk back to my home in Hull.

There was no idea in my mind of breaking or attempting to break records. I just undertook it for fun, and was determined to cover the distance without a break for sleep. On the journey I came across an old and much-begrimed Knight of the Road, whom I asked if he could tell me the distance to Hull. He supplied the information and inquired when I wanted to get there.

"Oh," said I, "I'm walking straight through."

He nearly collapsed with shock, and as I walked on ahead of him I am certain he thought I was a wandering lunatic. After refusing many an offer of a lift on the road, I arrived in Hull thirty-two hours from the time I left Hartlepool.

My walk from London to Edinburgh took place in that very hot summer of 1921. Starting on the hottest day we had had for thirty years, I suffered considerable discomfort as the temperature soared upwards day by day. Apart from the heat itself, one source of much pain to me was the tar on the roads, which became liquefied and splashed the calves of my legs. It also stuck to my shoes to such an extent that from time to time I had to stop and my cyclist-attendant had to cut it away. It even clogged the brakes of the cycle.

I plodded on with the perspiration dropping off me and my singlet clinging to me like a wet rag, a miserably uncomfortable creature. Passing the other side of Luton, an elegantly-dressed youth seated in a touring car stared at me with a look of mingled contempt and amazement. He slowed down to pass me, and as he opened out the throttle again and moved ahead he

called, " You —— old fool ! " My attendant, who has been known to swear for half an hour without using the same word twice, had almost exhausted the whole of his vocabulary when, after a moment's reflection, I called out, " Leave him alone, Phil. He's quite right ! "

Later in the course of that walk I took off my singlet and, covering myself with olive oil, walked on with bared chest. Approaching a village, I thought it would be more in keeping with the proprieties if I clothed myself more decently, so I once more donned the soaking garment. The first person I came upon in the village was an old woman fetching water from the village pump. She looked up as I approached and, a horrified expression upon her countenance, suddenly turned and fled, screaming as she did so, " Here comes the walker and he's half naked ! " I wonder what she would have said had she met me half an hour earlier !

Some people have curious ideas of how best to encourage a walker. One fellow on that walk to Edinburgh called to me, " The quicker you go the sooner you'll get there," but this type of individual is not so wrath-provoking as the person of whom you have inquired the distance. " It's just a matter of six miles," he replies, kindly ; " you'll soon be there ! " After having walked the six miles, one finds there are maybe another six miles to go, the considerate informant having thought it would lift up my heart if he reduced the distance by half !

I should mention, by the way, that I completed the walk to Edinburgh in eighty-two hours actual walking time, an average of about five and a quarter miles an hour. From London to York took me thirty-seven hours, an average of five and a half miles an hour.

I have had a few novel races in my time, mostly against horses whose owners can't believe I am capable of beating their animals in a contest over a good distance. The secret of the matter lies in the fact that I have the stamina to keep up speed for hours on end, whereas the animal gets tired and has to drop back from a canter into a walk which is slow compared with mine. The horse is allowed to trot, gallop, or walk. Only one horse has ever beaten me in a long-distance contest. Even the so-called wonder-horse, Yorkshire Boy, was unable to do so. This animal was owned by a New Zealand farmer, who bought him in this country and who went from London to York on him in the record time of eighty-four hours gross. I set out to beat that time, and did so, for a wager. The journey occupied seventy-seven hours altogether, seven hours better time than the horse had made.

I THINK the most interesting and, in some ways, amusing match I ever took part in was against a farmer's pony at Selby, Yorkshire. In the fall of the year 1920 I was to make an attempt to lower the London to Brighton record, and was training at Riccall, near Selby, the seat of Sir John Butcher, K.C., M.P. for York.

On Friday morning I left my training quarters for London to make the attempt on the Saturday, but upon my arrival in the Metropolis I found the city enveloped in just about as bad a fog as one could imagine, and with small hopes of any change I was reluctantly compelled to postpone the attempt. As London, in the circumstances, was no place for a man training for such a formidable task, I decided to return North again, and this I did. I reached Selby on the Monday, and this being market day I knew many of my farmer friends would be at the Rose and Crown, so I decided to look in. Hardly had I put my head inside the door when I was met with the remark, " Why, dang it, here's the very man ! "

" What is it ? " I inquired.

" Well," said one of the men gathered about the bar, " Old Harry here," indicating one of the company, " weant believe that tha walked fra the Stone Bridge, Selby, to the Black Dog, Camblesforth, and back under t' hour."

" Nay, ah weant," remarked the farmer alluded to ; " why, dash it all, my poorny couldn't trot it in that time."

" Well," I replied, " if such be the case, I'm willing to match myself to walk the distance against your pony trotting for a ten-pound note to-morrow."

" I'll tak tha," he said, and suiting the action to the words he handed over to a stake-holder his ten pounds, which was promptly covered by me.

The farmers were now in merry mood and insisted that I join them in a few drinks. One farmer, noticing this, and I doubt not thinking to himself, " He'll not walk far on that," offered to bet me twenty pounds that I could not walk fourteen miles in two hours on an out and in road. If he was reckoning on the ale stopping me, all I can say is that he does not know the value of a pint or two of good wholesome beer.

I at once accepted his offer, but as I had not enough cash on me to put up this further twenty pounds, I suggested we fasten the wager with a deposit of two pounds aside, the remainder to be put down by noon the next day, when we could settle the other details. To this he consented very reluctantly, thinking no doubt it was such easy money for him that he didn't want to give me any chance of drawing back. He murmured something about " liking to hev the

lot down," but, as I explained to him, it was out of the question.

The next morning, with half of Selby out to see the start, the pony and I lined up for the race to the Black Dog and back. The whole of the road is perfect for walking, it was a beautiful day, and I felt in excellent trim, which made me sure I should do good time for the journey. The referee gave the order to start, and, being quicker into my stride than the pony, I immediately took the lead and held it to the finish, winning by forty yards. The time taken was fifty-six minutes, and the distance was seven and three-quarter miles.

The jovial farmer who owned the pony, which he had driven in the race, was the first to congratulate me on my performance, saying it was worth ten pounds to see it done. I heard of him afterwards telling his friends that I was a machine, not a man, and that I had done the last mile as fast as I did the first. He had to stand much chaff afterwards, but took it all in good part. One wag advised him to get his own back by betting I could not walk sixteen miles in two hours. " If he said he could walk twenty miles in two hours," the farmer replied, " a'll agree wi' him. A'm on his side next." Some of the wives in the district, fearing the ponies would be ill-used, warned me not to talk of any more matches of a similar nature.

Being quicker into my stride than the pony, I immediately took the lead.

The other farmer who had been so confident that the beer would beat me was content to forfeit his two pounds, remarking, " I've seen enough to satisfy me; he can keep my two quid," and I have no doubt he felt glad after all that he had caught me unprepared to put the lot down.

Training near a well-known racing centre, I was out for a good strong walk, wearing my everyday clothes and not singlet and shorts. As I swung along the road, I espied a smart turn-out of pony and trap which I afterwards found belonged to the head lad of a certain racing establishment. As he passed, he inquired good-naturedly if I wanted a lift, but not wanting to dry off

until I got to my bath, I thanked him and remarked that I was in a hurry. He gave one glance at me and applied the whip to the pony. The animal shot forward. Smiling to myself, I went after him, doing good time. The pony drew more and more ahead. But that did not worry me, for I knew there was a probability when we got to the next hill of my overtaking him. It happened as I had anticipated, and I entered the town an easy first. As a matter of fact, when the pony and trap arrived at the hotel where I was staying I was in my bath.

When I came down again the driver of the turn-out was relating his experience to a number of people in the smoke-room. They gave one another sly glances as they chipped him about his pony, one offering to buy it for a pet for his children rather than hear of its being destroyed.

MY career as a walker was once very nearly abruptly terminated. It was at a time when I was training in the North, during a very hot summer. In fact, it was the same summer in which I made the London to Edinburgh walk, and it was for this event I was putting myself through my paces.

Owing to the stifling heat of the day I found it better to do most of my training at night. I would go for long walks and return in the dusk. One evening when darkness had fallen I was passing the outskirts of a village along a road which I had already traversed several evenings in succession. My shorts and jersey made the only patch of white in the dusk.

I was walking along well when I heard a movement from behind a hedge, and next moment there was a terrific explosion at my ear and I heard something whiz past me through the air. I confess I got such a shock that I took to my heels. Next day I returned to make inquiries, and then learned what had happened. My mysterious passage in white along the road on several occasions had given rise to the rumour that a ghost walked there. The village became quite frightened, and one of the farmers, more bold than the rest, at last declared he would soon put a stop to it. On the night in question, then, in company with a little band of more or less timid spectators, the farmer proceeded, gun in hand, to take up a position behind a hedge.

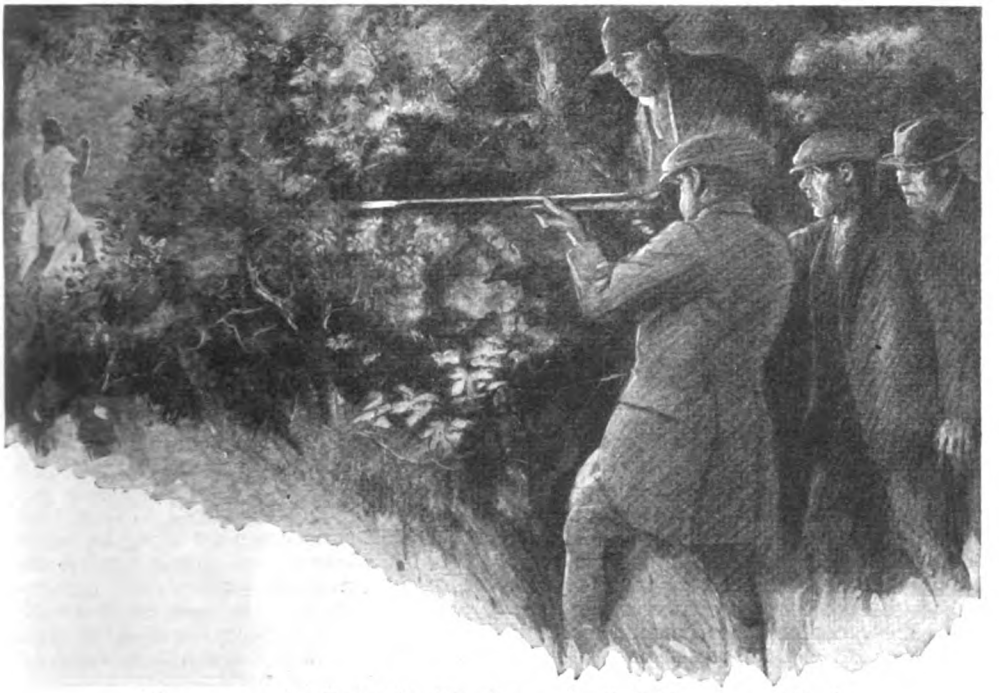
Not long after along came the "ghost," walking quicker than any mortal man could have done. The farmer levelled his gun and fired—with both barrels!

The farmer confessed to me that the only thing that saved my life was that, through fear, he had shut his eyes when he fired the shot!

During my record-breaking tramp to York every village, once I had got into Yorkshire territory, turned out and gave me a welcome, knowing I was a Yorkshireman—every village, that is, except one.

When I arrived in this particular village there was not a soul to greet me. It surprised me, although, of course, there was no reason why it should. I made my way, with my attendant, to an hotel where we were going to put up for a few hours. Before entering the inn I put on a jacket. As we were signing the register the landlady remarked that I looked tired and asked if I had been walking.

George Cummings passing through Biggleswade during his walk from London to York.



Along came the "ghost." The farmer levelled his gun and fired.

"Yes," I replied, "I'm doing a long-distance walk to York."

She looked at me in amazement.

"You are the walker!" she exclaimed. "Then who was——?"

Soon after the story came out. The village had organized a reception—but had accorded it to the wrong man! The "champion" they had fêted was a tramp who had entered the village dressed in shorts, and just as a joke announced he was "the walker"! In the end the villagers had had their suspicions, for when "the walker" went on his way to York he was reeling and singing along the road!

One more story of man versus horse before I conclude. At one time in my life I was a boilermaker by trade, and I was sent by my firm from Middlesbrough to Barrow-in-Furness to carry out a job there. I was then still a comparatively young man, and, while aware of my abilities as a walker, had not taken up pedestrianism as a profession, there being no inducements, financial or otherwise, to do so. While I was at Barrow the first engineers' lock-out strike took place. In the circumstances I realized that the best thing for me to do was to get back to Middlesbrough, and as, a few weeks before, I had heard of someone walking the distance in a week, I took up a challenge that I could not complete it in four days. As a matter of fact, I accomplished it in forty-two hours. But what I am concerned about at the moment is an incident that occurred on the way.

I had stopped to have some bread and cheese in a village, and I noticed a pony and trap, containing a man and two ladies, one the wife, the other the daughter of the owner. Like myself they were having lunch, which they finished some time before me. When my repast was over and I was ready to start off again, the trap with its occupants was some hundred yards on its way. Just for fun I set out to make up on it, but did not succeed until we came to the first big hill. The daughter, who sat at the back and could see me making up on them, grew more and more surprised—according to the expression on her face—as I drew nearer, until finally she entered into the fun of the thing and kept urging her father to get the pony to go faster. But the advantage was mine, and near the top of the hill I passed ahead. As I did so and went on as strong as ever, the daughter called to her father, "Ask him to give us a pull, daddy!"

This last year I spent my holidays walking about the seaside places, the most enjoyable and healthful vacation that one could have. I am at present in training for a walk of a thousand miles. A big task, certainly—but so long as one has a sense of humour, more or less, the obstacles are not nearly so big as they would be otherwise.

BLIND FEAR

By ELISABETH KYLE

Illustrated by
STANLEY LLOYD

THE house, wide-eaved and all on one floor, stood on the slope of a little hill. White pillars supported a broad veranda that ran round three sides of it; and though the folding doors on the south side were flung wide open, a netted curtain hung before them so that those inside could see any stranger who came on to the veranda clearly, and beyond him the wide road and red-roofed town; while they themselves appeared only as dim ghosts behind the fine mesh of the netting.

There was something strange about the house. It was made of ordinary bricks and rough-cast, tiled with English tiles. And yet most people seeing it for the first time would have sworn that it was not built by any Western, and that no Western family lived in it. It stood on a soft green hillside, bare of trees save for a spruce or two and a pine. And yet into the minds of most people who came upon it suddenly there would flash inexplicable jumbled visions of dense undergrowth, of dark overhanging creepers, and of brooding heat.

Even those natives of the little town in the valley who were on calling terms with the Denisons confided to each other that, as soon as you began to climb the hill on which the bungalow stood, the sun (if there was a sun) beat down till it made you dizzy, and the sky burned till you could not bear to look at it. Or if it rained the rain came down with a heavy hiss and steamed up again from the earth in unwholesome vapours. And whether it rained or shone there was always a curious scent in the air which seemed to be compounded of animals and crushed flowers, too strong to be set down entirely to imagination.

Denison, having made a little fortune in the Straits, had built the bungalow himself. He was a morose man, soured with his struggle against the East. His wife was a silent woman, and their life might have been called lonely. There was, of course, Miss Driscoll, Mrs. Denison's companion, but she was such a shadowy nonentity that she did not count.

THESE two women sat alone in the hall behind the netted curtain one late afternoon, a bamboo table piled high with scraps of silk and calico between them. Miss Driscoll sewed steadily, her thin lips pursed together, but Mrs. Denison had pushed her work away and lay back against the cushions, her feet crossed on the great tiger-skin beneath them.

"I wonder, Mary, if this tiger came alive, whether your imagination would be equal to the strain, or whether you would refuse to believe it till too late?" The words dropped lazily from between her pale lips. Her eyes were closed, and she did not trouble to open them.

Miss Driscoll let fall her work and gazed blankly at her. Could she possibly be talking in her sleep? There was silence. Then the other, turning her dark head slightly, spoke again.

"Well, Mary?"

"I—I don't know what you're talking about. The tiger-skin is dead. It couldn't come alive."

"Exactly what I knew you would say. You have no imagination. I have. I can *feel* the ripple of its muscles underneath my feet as it gathers its big body together to spring; can see its head begin to turn——"

"Do stop, Judith!" Miss Driscoll spoke nervously. "Claude wouldn't like to hear you speak like that."

Mrs. Denison smiled a little.

"Claude hasn't an atom of imagination either. So, because he's out to-day and we're alone, I'm going to tell you rather a dreadful little story, one that I've kept to myself so long that if I don't tell it soon to someone in private I'll probably blurt it out at the next dinner-party. I'm going to tell it to you because you've no imagination and will

therefore probably not understand it; and also because, being a clergyman's daughter, you have been taught that it's wicked to break a promise. Promise me you will never tell another soul."

Faint phosphorescent sparks of interest lit themselves behind Miss Driscoll's glasses. She nodded.

"I promise."

Mrs. Denison began. Her voice was flat and colourless, and she never opened her eyes. It seemed as if she were merely talking aloud for the sake of arranging her thoughts.

"I came to the East when I was only a girl. I was to keep house for an uncle in Rangoon. He was a gambler. By day he worked hard, and every night he and his friends met and lost enormous sums to each other. My uncle's house became so notorious that young men just out were warned against it as if we had the plague. My uncle did his best. He forbade me to play at all, but he could not prevent my coming into the room. The fever bit me too, after watching them night after night, and I got just crazy to play. What a little fool I was!" The tired voice stopped. She turned restlessly in her chair and was silent.

Miss Driscoll finished her seam and bit the thread. "My father would never allow a pack of cards into the house," she said, severely.

"Your father was never in the East. He never felt so languid that if he could not get something to quicken his blood he would die. . . . Where was I? Oh, yes. Then one night Marquez came. He was a Eurasian, which shows to what my uncle was reduced in order to get men to play with. But he did not look darker than a Spaniard or an Italian, and only a slight elongation of his eyes and his blue-black hair betrayed him. He was good-looking, too. There was a fascination about him——

"He soon saw that I was dying to play and that I wasn't allowed. Then one night when we were alone he proposed that he should play for me. I mean, that his hand should really be mine, and that it would be my money that was lost or won, and each day we would find an opportunity to square up for the past evening's play.

"So we arranged it. Each night I stood behind his table, watching—he made a joke of it to the others—said I was his mascot; and when out of shame for what they would think I went somewhere else for a little, it was only as a dog on a leash goes—a short distance—before being drawn irresistibly back again.

"I was only a child then and did not understand money. I knew, of course, that I had lost a good deal. But Marquez kept putting off a settlement. He said he would pay my debts and let me know the whole amount later, and I was glad to postpone the evil moment.

"ONE night it came. Marquez left his table and came to me on the veranda. He told me what I owed him, which was more than I could ever pay. He knew it too. I heard that in his languid silky voice, curiously sibilant, which gave away the half-caste. I suppose, Mary, that your imagination isn't strong enough to realize that half of me was *glad?* Standing there with a hot wind bringing the city's jangle near us, and the heavy scent of the flowers rising from the garden below, half of me was drawn towards this strange man with the veiled eyes, who was cruel, I knew, but who might also be kind.

"There was another bit of me that shrank instinctively from him; but it quieted itself as I listened to what he was saying. He wanted to marry me, first because he loved me, and also (he was frank) because a European wife would help to overcome the repugnance which white men felt towards him because of his yellow streak. That streak had come to him from a distant source—a great-grandmother, I think he said; and because of it he suffered in business and in society.

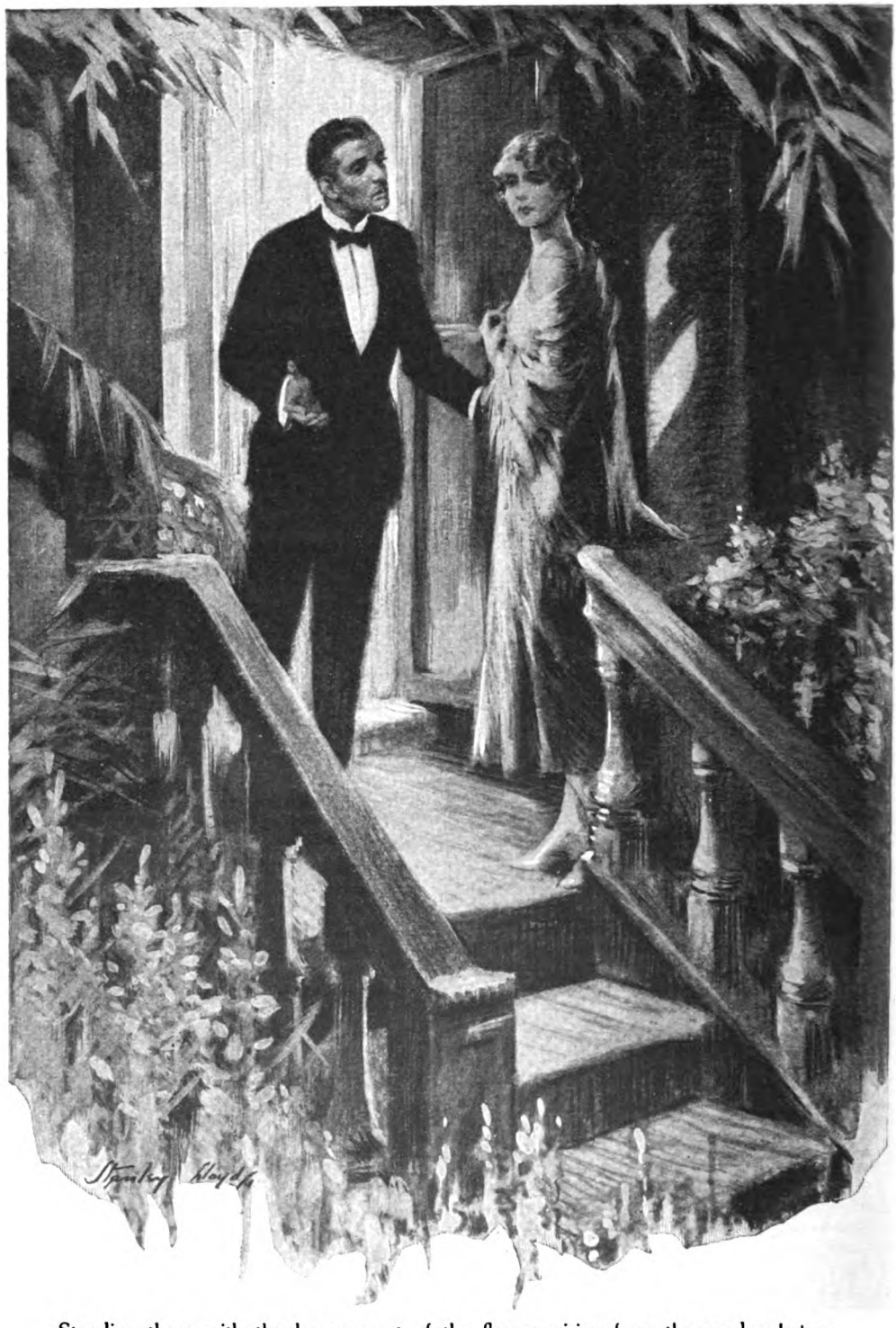
"I anticipated trouble from my uncle, and said so. He smiled slightly, and told me that my uncle had lost far more to him than I had. So he had caught us both in the same net."

Again the tired voice stopped. Miss Driscoll laid down her sewing definitely, to such an unaccustomed pitch of interest had her employer's story raised her.

"Do I understand that you became formally engaged to the half-caste?" she asked.

"Yes. What could we do? At first the excitement, the thrill of him, appealed to me. Then I began to notice things. His deliberate, evil cruelty to animals, for instance. At that the other part of my nature woke and suggested that he looked on me only as a flower that had caught his fancy; and one that he would not merely throw away when it was withered, but would probably tear to pieces first.

"One day he left Rangoon to do some business along the coast. The next day, while I was up in my room, a message was brought saying that his mother had called to see her future daughter-in-law. I ran downstairs and entered the drawing-room. A native woman squatted on some cushions in a corner of it. She was so fat she looked like a great yellow ball, and she was hung with gold brocade and jewels. I stared at her. Then I said: 'I was told that Mme.



Standing there with the heavy scent of the flowers rising from the garden below, half of me was drawn towards this strange man.

Marquez was here.' She smiled, her long gash of a mouth showing the blackened teeth, and said: 'I am Mme. Marquez.' And then I noticed how wickedly like she was to her son beneath the layers of fat."

"Then Marquez must have lied to you!" Miss Driscoll said.

"Yes. Nearly everything he told me had been lies—lies!" For the first time a trace of bitterness crept into Mrs. Denison's voice. "He kept his mother out of sight in the native part of the city. He never meant me to see her, and if he had not gone away she would never have managed to see me. And to think that all the natives in the place would have known how he hoodwinked me! I must have been the talk of the bazaars for weeks. Even my uncle's servants must have laughed at me! After she had gone I nearly died.

"That night Claude came to dinner. He had been to Rangoon on business before, and we knew each other fairly well, but he had not seen me since my engagement, nor had he ever heard of it. Before he came I asked my uncle not to tell him, and then I dressed more carefully than I had ever done in my life, and last thing before I went down I slipped off the carved emerald ring Marquez had given me. Claude was sailing home in ten days, Marquez returned in a fortnight, and my only hope was to make Claude take me with him.

"It was easy. You would not believe how easy it was to make a man of Claude's type want me. I was afraid of him, almost as afraid as I was of Marquez, but at least he was white. Only I was haunted with the fear that Marquez might return unexpectedly or that someone would tell Claude about him; for I knew Claude would have nothing to do with me if he knew about Marquez. He's that kind of man.

"THE day after I married Claude I was locking packing-cases on the floor of my uncle's study, when I looked up suddenly and saw Marquez standing before me. He was smiling, and looked hideously like his mother.

"'Where are you going?' he said.

"I could not answer. I was sick with fear.

"He stooped down and read one of the labels on the boxes.

"'Who is Mrs. Claude Denison?' he said. Then he moved towards the door.

"I managed to speak at last. 'What are you going to do?' I asked, in a kind of dry whisper.

"First I'm going to find Denison. Then I'm coming back to you.' And as I looked at him I saw that he knew the whole thing and was playing with me. I think it was that more than anything else that made me see red.

"There was a little bottle lying on the desk beside me. Dimly I remembered uncle telling me to be careful of it as it was dangerous. I snatched the bottle up and threw it at him." Mrs. Denison stopped speaking abruptly and, shuddering, covered her face with her hands, as though to blot out some horror.

Miss Driscoll sat motionless, gazing at her with the fascinated gaze of a rabbit at a snake. "What happened next?" she asked, breathlessly.

Slowly the other spoke, between long convulsive shudders. "Blood, much blood, where the broken pieces struck him. And then—it was vitriol that was in the bottle. He got it full in the face. He staggered about, shrieking that he was blind. I have his terrible shrieks in my ears night and day. Thank God I fainted. They took him away to his mother's, and next day Claude and I sailed for home. Uncle hushed things up so that Claude never knew——" The tired voice stopped.

Miss Driscoll looked at her with growing aversion.

"You are a wicked woman, Judith," she said.

The other moved her head restlessly. "Oh, don't you think I've paid?" she cried. "Don't you understand how my life since then has been a hell of fear? Fear lest Claude should hear of it, fear lest some day I shall *see* what I have dreamed of every night—the blind face of Marquez, all eaten up with vitriol. I tell you, Mary, this house is haunted with him, and if I ever saw him in reality I should die!"

She had raised her voice in her intensity, and the last few words echoed through the empty hall. Again there was silence, and then their strained hearing caught a slight sound outside. The faint tapping of a stick along the veranda.

Miss Driscoll looked round the arm of her chair and saw that a man was standing on the other side of the curtain. She could not see his face, for the evening light was behind him. She rose quickly, her mind still confused with Judith Denison's strange story, and jerked the curtain back.

She recoiled in horror and put her hands up to her face, feeling sick and faint. The impossible had happened. The tiger was alive. Facing her stood a man, very dark, the lower half of whose face seemed literally eaten away, the upper half mercifully covered with a shade. He was speaking, and his voice, curiously liquid, pronounced the sibilants with a slight hiss like a snake's.

"Does Mrs. Denison live here?" he asked.

Something deep down in Miss Driscoll's

Opposite him sat the terrified woman, her face a mask of fear.

heart rallied itself unconsciously to protect the woman behind her.

"No," she said; "you have come to the wrong house."

"Really?" The man's voice expressed nothing but courteous regret. "Then who, may I ask, lives here?"

"I do," Miss Driscoll said, swallowing hard. "My name is Mary Driscoll——"

"I beg your pardon for troubling you. They misdirected me at the station. I wonder—would it be too much to ask if I might come in and rest a little? The hill was steep. You will have to lead me, for you see I am blind." He did not wait for her, however, but lifting a corner of the curtain slipped behind it into the hall so dexterously as to give the impression, not that he had forced his way in, but that Miss Driscoll had stepped aside and motioned him to enter.

His stick tapped unerringly over the polished floor towards the place where Judith Denison sat terror-stricken, her hands grasping the arms of her chair till the veins stood out in them.

"Is there a chair here?" he asked, and as he spoke his outstretched arm caught the back of it, and began to travel along the wicker-work.

MISS DRISCOLL watched him, paralysed. Then with a supreme effort she took hold of his sleeve and half dragged him towards her own chair. He sank into it. Opposite him sat the terrified woman, her face a mask of fear, her eyes like black glassy pools, staring at the terrible face before her. She was perfectly silent, save for little choking pants like those of a wild animal.

"Is there anyone else here?" he asked, suddenly. "My hearing is very acute. I hear breathing."

"Oh!" said Miss Driscoll, and stopped. Then she went on, bravely: "That's my dog. He's been running——"

"I should like to make friends with your dog," the pleasant voice went on, lazily. "Where is he?" He reached his hand out in the direction of Mrs. Denison's chair, but low down, as though feeling for the body of a dog. She shrank back still farther, and her terrified eyes never left his face.

"My—my dog does not make friends with strangers," Miss Driscoll said, faintly; "perhaps it would be better to leave him alone."

"Perhaps," assented the other; "it is always foolish to run into danger. You say there are no Denisons in this part of the world?"

"No. They left a year ago. I don't know where they went."

"A pity. I have to catch the train in half an hour and have no time to make inquiries." A long sigh of relief came involuntarily from Judith Denison's pale lips. He went on, suavely: "But I shall come again when I have more time to devote to the search. Would it trouble you very much to put a blind man on his way to the station? I must go now if I am to catch that train."

He rose and groped about for his stick. She handed it to him and led him, with averted face, towards the curtain. As they reached it a slight sound made her turn round. Judith Denison had slipped from her chair and lay, a crumpled heap, on the tiger-skin.

"Surely something fell?" the stranger said, and took a step backward into the room again.

"No, no," Miss Driscoll cried, frantically; "it's only some silks that have slipped from the table. Come, or you will miss your train."

She led him down the steps and along the little path to the bottom of the hill. As she did so, it seemed to her that the atmosphere of brooding darkness seemed to hang about them more heavily than before, and she noticed the strange scent distinctly. At the bottom of the hill they stopped.

"If you had your choice," the man asked her, "would you torture the body or the soul?"

She gazed at him without speaking. Then to her horror he began to untie the knots which bound the green shade to the upper part of his face.

"Don't take it off!" she cried. "I can't bear any more. I can't—I can't!"

With one quick gesture he whipped it away, and she saw that the vitriol had only burned the lower part of his face. The upper part and the eyes were untouched.

"Why," she cried, "you are not blind at all!"

He smiled, and when she saw the smile she shuddered.

"I have had my revenge," he said. "I have kept her on the rack for two years—and this afternoon, while she thought I was blind, my eyes never left her face. When I am in pain, when I see people shrink from me, I shall remember her face and be comforted. And the rest of her life will be hell, for she will always expect me back."

He turned from her and began to walk towards the station. And Miss Driscoll stood watching him, her hand on her heart.

The Mystery of CHARLES DICKENS' WELL

By

A. W. BARNES

Mr. Barnes, who knows the Dickens country as thoroughly as a postman knows his round, gives some exceedingly interesting details concerning the troubles with which Dickens was confronted when he bought Gad's Hill Place; that he had trouble in connection with the water supply is well known, but an account of the interesting and rather unusual circumstances connected with their removal has never before appeared in print.

I FIRST heard this story rather more than twenty years ago from a man who knew the two most important persons mentioned therein—Charles Dickens and Mr. Smith.

At the time mentioned my informant lived about half a mile from Gad's Hill Place; he was then employed in the cement industry, but earlier in his life he had worked under Mr. Smith.

During an interesting conversation I had recently with Mr. Edwin Harris, of Rochester, who is Hon. Official Guide to the Dickens Fellowship, I found that he too had heard the story from sources that place its authenticity beyond doubt. I am pleased to have this opportunity of thanking Mr. Harris for having given me many corroborative details.

The Dickens family moved from Portsmouth to Chatham in 1816, and thus Charles Dickens became acquainted with that part of Kent with which his name and fame are now intimately and permanently associated. During his boyhood he experienced considerable hardship and unhappiness; there were, however, occasions when he was extremely happy, as when his father took him to see the beauty of the surrounding country; during one of these country walks they paid a visit to Gad's Hill, which is about five miles distant from the naval town. Gad's Hill Place is an old-fashioned red-brick house, having a porch, bay windows, and a bell turret which are covered with sheet lead; it stands in the midst of some of Nature's most beautiful handiwork—rolling hillsides, winding valleys, and leafy woods. When the future novelist saw the place he immediately fell in love with it, and, turning to his father, expressed the desire to have it as his very own. The father answered: "Well, if you will only work hard enough you may live in it, or one like it, when you become a man."

AFTER Dickens had founded *Household Words*, he one day heard with astonishment and delight that Gad's Hill Place, the house of his boyhood longings, was to be sold, and, more fortunate still, that "the lady chiefly interested as its owner" was well known to the novelist, and much esteemed by him. The news that Gad's Hill Place was for sale was conveyed to Dickens by Mr. W. H. Wills, who was on the editorial staff of the paper. The deal was soon settled, and Charles Dickens paid the purchase money—a cheque for one thousand seven hundred and ninety pounds—on March 14th, 1856.

Like many other persons who buy old property, Dickens found that when he acquired the house he acquired trouble also. First of all, the local clergyman was living in the house, and in a letter telling a friend of the purchase Dickens wrote: "The good old Rector has lived there six-and-twenty years, and I have not the heart to turn him out; he is to remain there until Lady Day next year."

But the novelist's most formidable trouble was in connection with the shortage of water; the water in a neighbouring pond being the only supply near at hand, and the nearest pure water—a spring—being more than half an hour's walk distant. John Forster in his "Life of Charles Dickens" gives some details of the difficulties the novelist encountered, but he does not tell us that Dickens was dissatisfied because of the supposed impurity of the water supplied by the

newly-sunk well, nor does he mention the very cunning trick by means of which a well-known Rochester man contrived to satisfy the novelist that the water was as " pure as the crystal spring."

In a letter dated July 6th, 1856, Dickens wrote : " We are still boring for water here, at the rate of £2 (two pounds) per day for wages : the men seem to like it very much and to be very comfortable."

On September 24th of the same year he wrote : " Here are six men perpetually going up and down the well (I know somebody will be killed) in the course of fitting a pump, which is quite a railway terminus—it is iron and so big ; the process is much more like putting Oxford Street (London) on end and laying gas mains along it than anything else ; by the time it is finished the cost of this water will be something absolutely frightful ; but of course it proportionately increases the value of the property, and that's my only comfort." Dickens also found that life in the country was associated with quite a variety of troubles ; the letter continues : " The horse has gone lame from a sprain ; the big dog has run a tenpenny nail into one of its hind feet ; the bolts have all flown out of the basket-carriage, and the gardener says that all the fruit trees want replacing with new ones." In another letter written three days later, the novelist again refers to the pump : " Five men have been looking attentively at the pump for a week and (I should hope) may begin to fit it in the course of October."

The remaining portion of this story, which now appears in print for the first time, clearly proves that the novelist's troubles in connection with the water supply extended beyond the sinking of the well and the installation of the horse-gear pumping machinery.

At last both well and pump were finished, and the house had its own supply of water, but it did not satisfy the gifted owner, who was obsessed by the idea that the water was not pure and that it tasted as though it was " polluted by some putrid matter." Dickens sought the advice of all the experts and well-sinkers who lived in the neighbourhood, but all informed him that no polluting matter found its way into the well ; they also said that they were unable to detect anything amiss with the taste of the water. It was water of the highest quality, they said, clear and pure ; but they failed to convince Charles Dickens, whose opinion concerning the matter remained unchanged.

Meeting a friend one day, Dickens told him of the troubles in connection with the water supply, adding with emphasis : " I *know* there is something wrong with that well ! " The friend advised Dickens to obtain the advice of a well-known resident of Rochester, named Smith. Mr. Smith was a man who possessed outstanding qualities ; his knowledge of human nature must have been almost as profound as that possessed by the master novelist ; in addition, he was able to sum up a situation and to decide upon the necessary course of action almost immediately. Moreover, he was well endowed with cunning, and few were more keenly alive to the value of artifice than he. Smith was a man of some importance in Rochester, where he was in the employ of the City Corporation as road foreman, but it is necessary to point out that in those

Group in the porch at Gad's Hill Place.

H. F. Chorley. Kate Dickens. Mamie Dickens. Charles Dickens. C. A. Collins. Georgina Hogarth.

days, before the office of city surveyor had been created, the road foreman was one who held a rather important office. Smith was also Master of Watts's Charity; he lived in a house adjoining the almshouses, and his duties were to see that the old pensioners kept their dwellings clean and in proper order, and that their behaviour was satisfactory—one inclines to the belief that he kept the inmates in order quite easily. Last, but not least, he was verger of St. Nicholas Church, Rochester—a post which it is understood he filled with considerable ability.

As road foreman, Smith had much to do with the water supply of the city, and it is for that reason that Charles Dickens sought him out and addressed him thus: "Mr. Smith, I wish you would come up to Gad's Hill; there is something wrong with the water supply, and I would like you to have a look at the well and tell me if you find anything amiss with it." At the time of this conversation the novelist had achieved fame, and he was greatly loved, and had the question been addressed to anyone else there is little doubt that an answer would have been given immediately, something like this: "Certainly, Mr. Dickens, I'll do it with pleasure—when would you like me to come?"

But Mr. Smith knew what he was about, and he went to work in quite a different manner. He hesitated, and with a doubtful shake of the head replied: "Well, Mr. Dickens, I don't see that I can do any good; you've had all the well-sinkers for miles around—you've had Cox, and he's the best man on water supplies in this district—and they all say that there is nothing wrong with the water. Why need I come? I can't do more than they have done." Dickens replied: "I've heard a very good account of you, Mr. Smith; you have a great deal to do with water supplies in Rochester, and if you will be good enough to oblige me, I should much like to have your opinion." Smith hesitated a moment, then he answered, rather reluctantly: "Oh, very well, Mr. Dickens, if you really wish it I'll come."

Dickens tendered his thanks and went home feeling rather pleased; but it is probable that even as they stood talking a plan had been evolved in the brain of the wily Smith which was to rid the novelist of the trouble he had in connection with the water supply.

A FEW days later Smith made his way to Gad's Hill Place; under his arm he carried a brown-paper parcel which contained a "smock"—a kind of long canvas coat, which in those days took the place of the overalls of the present day—but the smock was wrapped tightly round *the dead body of a well-developed cat.*

On arrival Smith asked for the novelist, who came to the door and exclaimed: "Hullo, Mr. Smith! Have you come to investigate the trouble we have with the water?" "Yes, Mr. Dickens," answered Smith, and, pointing to the parcel under his arm, said: "I have brought my smock with me so that I may go down the well and investigate as fully as possible." "Splendid!" answered Dickens, adding: "I'll show you where the well is, and ask the gardener to help you, then I must return to my writing. Let me know if you find anything wrong."

Just what stratagem Smith employed to get the gardener out of the way we do not know; we do know, however, that he was quite equal to the occasion, and that he managed to take the cat down the well without letting anyone else know that he did so. Smith remained down the well for some little time, making a fair amount of noise; he also dipped the cat in the water and rubbed it well on the mud which the water had brought in with it when trickling into the well; then he shouted to the gardener: "Will you go to Mr. Dickens and ask him if he will please come here?"

A few minutes later the novelist shouted down the well: "Now, Mr. Smith, have you found anything?"

"I'm coming up, sir," answered Smith. A few moments passed and then the head of Smith appeared out of the top of the well.

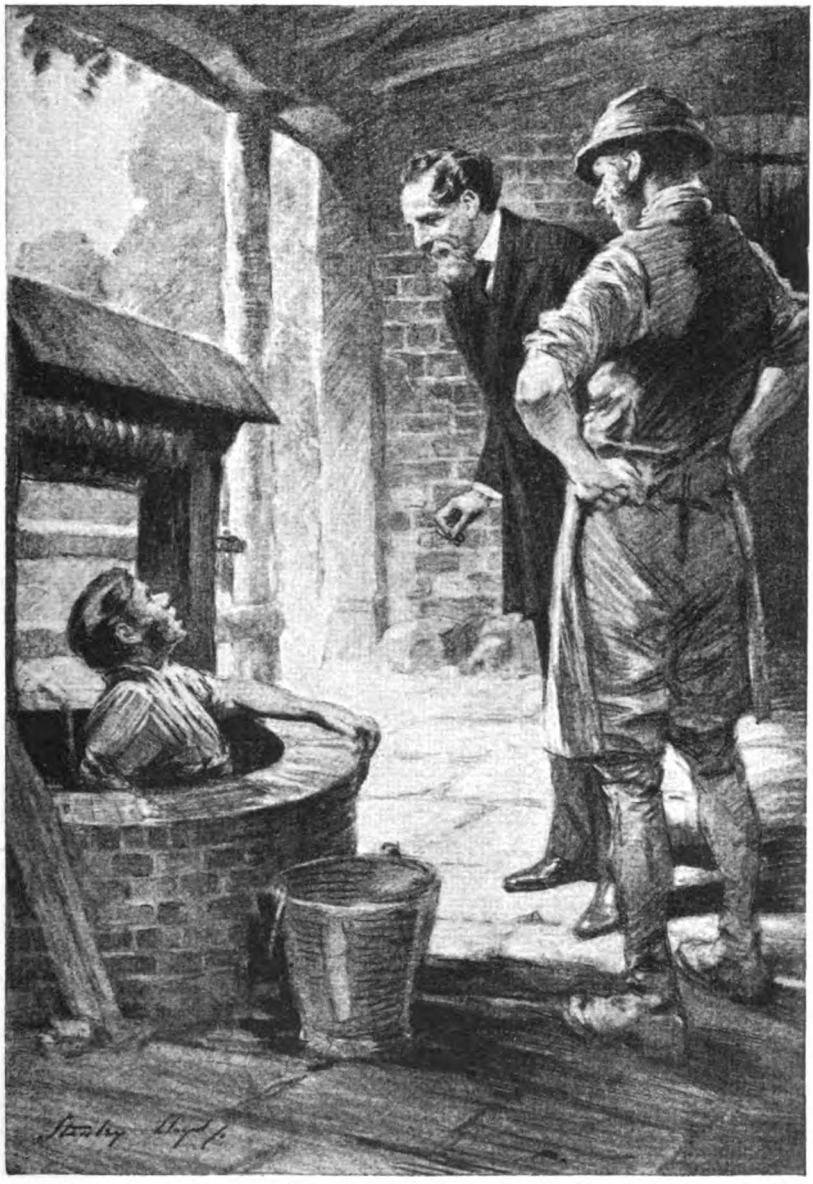
"Anything to report?" asked Dickens, whose features saddened for a moment when Smith said: "I can't find anything wrong with the well, or with the water coming into it." Then, raising his arm out of the well and displaying the dripping dead cat, he continued: "But I found this dead cat down there!"

Dickens threw up his arms in delight and triumph, and exclaimed: "I *knew* there was something wrong in that well—I was *certain* of it!" Then, following the advice of the crafty Smith, he had the well pumped dry, and when the supply was again available he was quite satisfied that it was perfectly pure, consequently the trouble with the water supply ceased to exist.

What a splendid instance this furnishes of the extent to which the happiness of human beings depends upon the possession of a contented state of mind! Had the cat been in the well long enough to have given a bad taste to the water, the body would have been in an advanced stage of decomposition, powerful proof of which would probably have reached the nasal organs of those who happened to be standing near. But so

obsessed was Dickens by the idea that the water was really bad that he allowed his marvellously keen powers of observation to remain dormant. We can only regret that Dickens did not know more of Smith. What a delightful story the master novelist could have woven around such a character!

It has been said that all great men have their weak points, and this episode of Smith and the cat suggests that Dickens sometimes placed too profound a faith in certain types of humanity—and the world would be a much happier place if the weaknesses of each one of us took a form equally unobjectionable to those with whom we come into contact. Faith in Smith brought Charles Dickens a satisfactory water supply, happiness, and peace of mind; would that the weakness of each one of us could bring about equally happy results!



Dickens shouted down the well: "Now, Mr. Smith, have you found anything?" A few moments passed and then the head of Smith appeared.

We do not know in what manner Dickens rewarded Smith, but we may feel certain that he received a handsome reward, and that he was well paid for his jugglery with the dead cat. And who shall say that he did not deserve it? After all, he had rendered the novelist really great service.

That Dickens was right when he wrote stating that the well would increase the value of the property is beyond doubt. When Gad's Hill Place was sold after his death the reserve price placed upon it was more than four times the amount he paid when he bought it.

Dilemma

By

"SAPPER"
(H.C.McNEILE)

Illustrated by
S. BRIAULT.

I AM on the horns of the most appalling dilemma. I don't know what I ought to do, and the more I think about it the more hopelessly difficult does it become.

Listen, and I'll put the case to you. And if you can think of the right way out I shall be vastly obliged.

I shall have to go back a couple of years —nearly three—to the wedding of Lady Alice Denver to Mr. William Scrotton. You may remember it: it was one of the events of the season. Blood marrying money, of course, though the illustrated weeklies glossed it over a bit. A bit—that's all: because nothing could gloss over Scrotton's appearance. Hardware, I think—or tinned food; anyway, the point is immaterial. He was a millionaire, which was all that mattered to Alice Denver.

You raise your eyebrows: I tell you I knew that girl. Better than most people. Hard: why, Scrotton's hardest tin was like putty compared to her. Beautiful undoubtedly; but underneath the beauty—rotten: rotten to the core.

Why Scrotton married her was best known to himself. He was just a plain, vulgar man, twenty years older than her. And she treated him like dirt. If it was for social advancement—he paid the price; if it was because he desired her, and was accustomed to having his desires gratified, well—I'm thinking he made a pretty bad bargain. The possession of a being who loathes you and despises you is a poor form of enjoyment.

Why she married him is obvious. The Earls of Lakington have never been well off, and the present one—her father—was practically bankrupt, till Scrotton's money saved the situation.

The wedding took place at the height of the season, and to this day I don't know why I attended. I didn't know Scrotton: I didn't like his bride. The only reason why I had been honoured with an invitation was to ensure that I sent a present, and I should certainly never have been missed if I hadn't gone. However, that is beside the point: I did go. And now I wish to Heaven I hadn't.

The church was crammed with society people who had come to see the sale. Scrotton, with his neck bulging over his collar, looked worse than usual as he waited for his bride, and yet, of the two, I was the more sorry for him. Jove! If the poor devil could have heard the remarks a bunch of people in front of me were making about him!

I'd taken a seat right at the back of the church, and I'd been there about five minutes when a general craning of heads announced the bride's arrival. And I don't suppose Alice Denver had ever looked more beautiful in her life. White suited her.

She went up the aisle on her father's arm, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left. And she gave one the impression of a block of ice. She knew—none better—the comments that were being made, and she called up all that scornful hardness of hers as if to challenge the gossipers to do their worst. It was a part of the price, and it had been duly reckoned.

It was just after the service commenced that I noticed him for the first time. He'd slipped into the end of my pew, and I put him down as a member of the general

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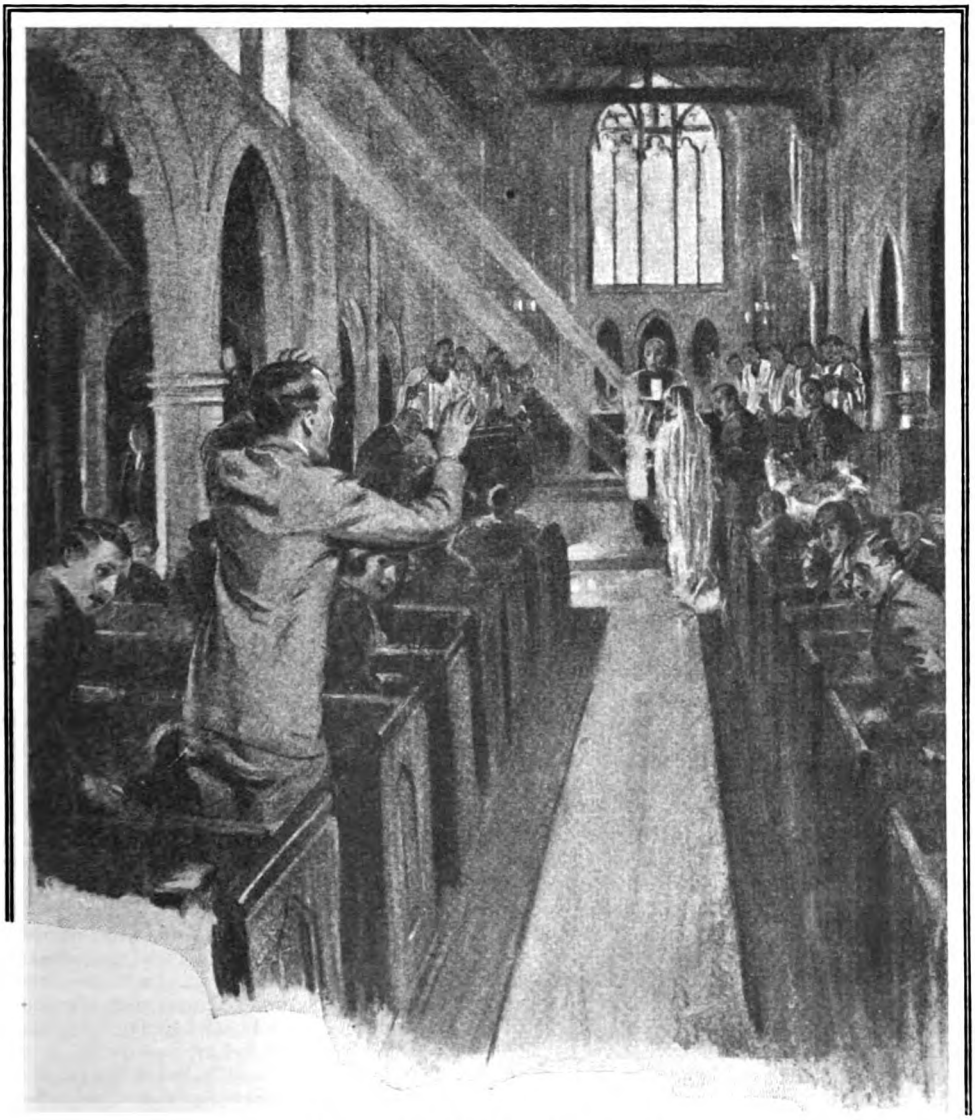
public who had managed to get in somehow. Or perhaps a reporter. He was dressed in a threadbare lounge suit, and his collar was none too clena. His face was emaciated : his age somewhere between thirty and forty. But the thing that riveted my attention after a time was his extreme restlessness. His hands were never still ; his eyes—bright and feverish—kept darting all over the church, only to return always to the two figures standing in front of the altar.

And then quite suddenly it happened, and his voice rang through the church.

" Stop ! For God's sake—stop ! "

It was a ghastly moment. The organ petered out abruptly : the choir ceased singing, and everyone craned round to see the cause of the interruption. He was standing up, his arms thrown out—and thus for a moment or two did he remain. Then, as if conscious of what he had done, his nerve seemed suddenly to go. And before anybody could stop him, he was out of the door and gone.

Horrified officials came hurrying up ; old Lakington himself, in a state of pitiful agitation, almost ran down the aisle. The shock to him must have been terrific ; to



" Stop ! For God's sake—stop ! "

be deprived of the Scrotton money when he had to all intents and purposes felt it jangling in his pockets completely unnerved him. They appealed to me, and I told them that I thought it must be some madman who had eluded the guardians at the door. And that, at the time, is what I did think. At any rate, he had disappeared, and the pause was becoming more and more embarrassing. So, after a hurried conference, the organ let drive again, and a few minutes later Lady Alice Denver became Lady Alice Scrotton. And the Earl of Lakington breathed freely once again.

Somewhat naturally, so I was told afterwards, it was the sole topic of conversation at the reception. Everybody sympathized with the happy pair, and the general belief seemed to be that he was some unbalanced fanatic or Communist agitator who had deliberately tried to wreck the proceedings on some distorted question of principle.

THAT, as I say, is what I was told. Because I didn't go to the reception. And now I wish to Heaven I had. No; I didn't go—not being able to be in two places at once. And whilst the reception was being held, I was talking to the unbalanced fanatic in my rooms.

Why does one do these things? Why, for instance, when, on leaving the church, I saw his face in the crowd outside the door, did I not say to the nearest policeman—"There is the man who created the disturbance in church"? I don't know; let it suffice that I didn't. I merely stood chatting to one or two people, and keeping the corner of my eye fixed on him. And when he moved abruptly out of the onlookers and walked off rapidly, I followed him.

He swung round as I overtook him, and stared at me defiantly.

"May I ask the reason of your extraordinary outburst?" I said, quietly.

"You may ask," he answered. "That's as far as it will get."

"Indeed!" I said. "You see that policeman? Can you suggest any good reason why I shouldn't give you in charge?"

"I wish to God you would," was his surprising reply. "If they sent me to prison for a few years I might be safe. Oh! don't think I'm mad: I'm as sane as you are."

"Doubtless," I agreed, courteously. "So, proceeding on that assumption, perhaps you would be good enough to tell me why you did it. My rooms happen to be close by, where we shall be undisturbed."

For a moment or two he hesitated: then he gave a sudden harsh laugh.

"Very well, I will," he said. "On one condition—and one condition only. That you write down briefly what I am going to say to you, and post it to your bank or your lawyer to-night in a sealed envelope."

"Well, really——" I began, doubtfully.

But now it was he who was insistent.

"Take me to your rooms," he demanded. "It's got to be told—this thing, and you'll do as well as anyone else."

That he was still in a very excited state was obvious, though he walked beside me in silence as far as my door. But his hands were twitching and there was a queer light in his eyes that made one or two people we met stare at him curiously. In fact, once or twice I was on the point of suddenly remembering another appointment. But I didn't—more's the pity.

"WELL, let's hear all about it," I said, as soon as we were comfortably settled. "Would you like a drink?"

"No, thanks," he answered. "Drink is a luxury that people in my financial position can't afford."

He lay back in his chair, and I waited for him to start. But his eyes were travelling round the room, and there was a twisted smile on his lips.

"God! How I envy you this!" He waved a comprehensive hand. "It's what I was brought up to expect—and look at me. I'm Eton, you know—and Balliol; though for the Lord's sake don't think I'm begging. Nor do I want to bore you with the oft-told tale of the gentleman who went wrong. We'll take all that for granted. Sufficient to say that when I was twenty-four I came the most almighty mucker, and was driven with oaths and curses into outer darkness by my family.

"But I didn't go alone; a girl came with me—my wife. And though it's a good few years ago now, the marvel of her sacrifice has increased rather than diminished. For she wasn't my wife when she came, you'll understand. It was just that for some inscrutable reason she had the love for me that passeth understanding—and that love has endured.

"Heaven knows how: it has been tested pretty high. Starvation, cold, even dirt—I've been through them all. And she's been with me—to make it easier."

The queer look in his eyes had gone, and I turned and stared out of the window. There are moments when it is not good to look on a man's face.

"Six months ago," he continued, abruptly, "I was starving, cold, and dirty. All three at the same time. I'd tramped the streets the whole day, and you may take it from me that the London streets in December are not pleasant places for anyone in the condition I was in. One begins to see things that

aren't there, and hear noises that no one else does. And one begins to understand revolution and riot.

" It was about ten o'clock that I found myself sitting on a chair in one of the parks. How I got there I don't know; my last coherent recollection was passing Romano's, in the Strand, just as a man I had known came out with a girl. They got into a Rolls and drove away, while I would have sold my soul for the bits of bread they hadn't eaten."

He laughed shortly.

" Don't worry; I won't bore you any more with that sort of stuff. But I want you to realize the condition I was in; it's rather important. Well—as I said, I found myself on this chair, and for how long I sat there I don't know. It can't have been long, because at eleven o'clock I found myself walking along Great Portland Street. I'd noticed the time on that clock by the Langham, so I'm sure about that. Incidentally, you're making notes of the principal points, aren't you? I'd like you particularly to remember that time.

" I walked on with a curious sense of unreality; you get it, you know, when your stomach is flapping against your backbone. And at last I came to Sussex Place. I paused for a bit, and I remember wondering what the deuce I was doing there.

" It was as I was leaning against the railings that I noticed that the curtains of the lower room of the house opposite were blowing about in the open window. It was open at the bottom, and every now and then the flicker of firelight came through the opening.

" The street was deserted, and the thought occurred to me how easy it would be to get in. Warmth, at any rate; perhaps something small that might be pawned next morning—but warmth.

" AGAIN my memory closes down; I have no recollection whatever of climbing into that house. But I got there, and for the next few minutes nothing mattered except huddling over that fire. Of the risk I ran I thought nothing; when the primitive necessities of life are wanting one doesn't worry over risks.

" At last I got up, and there on the table were sandwiches and drinks. Undoubtedly people who had gone out to some show and were returning later, I reflected. Well, I could only regret that my need was greater than theirs, and that if they had a servant who was careless enough to leave the window open they must take the consequences. And it was as I put out my hand to seize the food that my foot kicked against something under the table.

" You must remember that there was very little light in the room at the time; somewhat naturally I had not turned on the switch. But I can still feel the pricking at the back of my scalp, the sudden start of fear I gave at that unexpected contact. For intuitively I knew that there was something terrible under the table. Don't ask me how; I did.

" I had to force myself to bend down and look, and even as I did so I saw a thing which froze me where I stood—a dark, ominous pool that gleamed red in the firelight. I backed away step by step until I could see under the table, and then I almost screamed. A man was lying there, and it needed no second glance to tell that he was dead.

" HOW long I stood there staring at him I can't say, but at last my nerves had steadied themselves enough for me to go and see what had happened. He was lying with his legs under the table, and the rest of his body outside. He had on a smoking-jacket and a soft pleated shirt—the front of which was saturated with blood. His eyes were open and staring with a look in them of terrible fear. And by his side there lay a fine-pointed stiletto, also covered with blood.

" Once again time stood still. It may have been a minute—it may have been five—before I bent and touched him, to find he was still quite warm. And then unreasoning panic seized me. The thing had only just been done; perhaps not two minutes before I had entered the room. The murderer must be in the house somewhere; possibly in the very room. And once again I almost screamed. I stared round like a trapped animal; my legs were powerless to move. I could realize with one side of my mind the ghastly danger of my position; but my brain wouldn't react as to what I was to do. It was panic—sheer panic."

He took a handkerchief from his pocket and mopped the sweat from his forehead with a hand that shook like a leaf.

" At last the power of action came back to me, and I took a step towards the window. To get away: that was my sole coherent thought. And I had actually got one leg over the sill, when suddenly the room was flooded with light and a woman stepped out from behind a screen near the door. She was staring at me calmly and dispassionately, and for a moment or two I stared back, taking in every detail of her face. It was beautiful—one of the most beautiful I have ever seen—but cold and hard. And then, even as I watched her, a faint triumphant smile curled round her lips. She took one look at the thing that lay sprawling on

the floor, and then, quite deliberately, she screamed."

He leaned towards me, and the light was blazing in his eyes again.

"Make a strong note of that, my friend; emphasize it in every possible way. Her scream was not due to what she saw: she knew it was there: she had known all along. I could read her mind, I tell you; I could trace every thought in that cold, calculating brain. It was she who had killed the man herself, and it was I who was to pay the penalty. I could see it as clearly as I see you now.

"She screamed again and again, and, by God! she could act. Her face now was distraught with horror, as she stood there flattened against the wall. I heard footsteps outside in the hall, I saw the door opening, and then with one desperate effort I flung myself through the window and jumped. Jumped straight into the arms of a waiting policeman.

"'Let me go,' I yelled. 'I'm innocent. She did it.'

"'Maybe she did,' came a gruff voice. 'But we can't have you shouting in the Park like this. Wake up, and get a move on.'

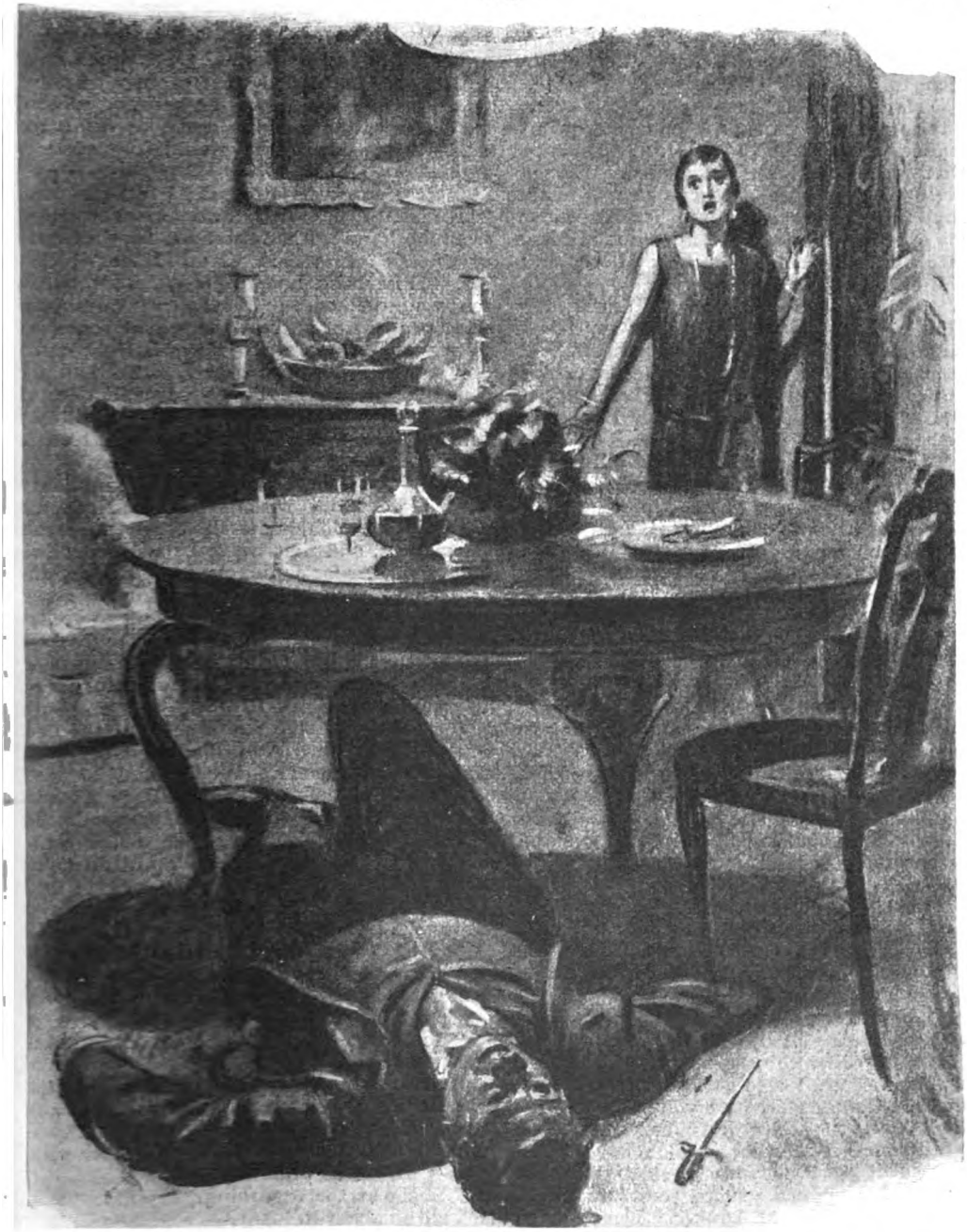
"I was still sitting on the chair in the Park."

I had actually got one leg over the sill, with light and a woman stepped

He paused, and stretching out his hand he took a cigarette.

"May I?" he asked, quietly.

"Of course," I answered. "Help yourself. But do you mean to tell me that all this



when suddenly the room was flooded out from behind a screen.

song and dance you've been telling me was nothing but a dream ? "

" Nothing but a dream—a terrible dream —until to-day. And so you wonder, don't you, wherein lies the connection between it and my behaviour in church ? You shall hear. The man who was murdered in my dream was a man whom I had never seen before. He was a complete stranger to me—he is still. But to-day I saw him. What twist of Fate took me past that church I know not ; but it's all in keeping, I tell you—all in

keeping. The murdered man was to-day's bridegroom."

I stared at him speechlessly: there didn't seem to be anything to say.

"Mark you, sir," he went on, gravely, "this is no question of hallucination. I make no attempt to explain it. For months that dream has been just a dream, though vivid to the point of reality in my mind. And this afternoon I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw the murdered man going into that church. I waited: I couldn't help it. I had to see the bride.

"I never had any doubt; during the quarter of an hour I stood there I never had any doubt. And when the woman who had stepped out from behind the screen stepped out of her car and took her father's arm it caused me no surprise. It seemed to me to be inevitable.

"And then—I wonder if you will understand?—I seemed to feel the coils of Fate closing down on me. I felt I must make a desperate effort to shake myself free, before it was too late. And some blind impulse stronger than me drove me into the church, and made me do what I did. Foolish, I admit: I realize now that I've got to go through with it."

"Go through with what?" I cried, a little irritably.

"My dream," he answered. "As surely as I am sitting here in this chair talking to you that woman will murder her husband, by stabbing him through the heart with a pointed stiletto. It will take place about half-past eleven one night in a house in Sussex Place, and I shall be in the room and be arrested for the murder. It won't be a dream next time."

"But," I cried, angrily, "the remedy against that possibility lies in your own hands. Don't go near Sussex Place; or, if you do, don't break into any house where a window is open."

"That, I agree, is the only common-sense way of looking at it," he answered. "But there are other things in this world beside common sense. It is as surely ordained as the fact that one day both you and I will die. And when it happens, don't forget what I've told you this afternoon. You have taken notes: if you will, you can expand them a little. But I hold you to your promise to send them to your banker. I may need them."

AND the next instant he was gone, leaving me in a state of complete bewilderment. Had I been listening to the ravings of a lunatic? Something inside me said No. Highly strung—obviously; but the man who had just left me was no madman. Then what did it mean?

For an hour or so I sat on wondering; then, with a smile at my own credulity, I amplified the notes I had jotted down more to humour him than anything else. I dated it, and slipped it in an envelope. I sent the letter with a covering note to my bank. And—that, as I say, was nearly three years ago.

It was six months later that I left England. The strange interview had almost faded from my mind; I had seen no further trace of the dreamer. And when I heard that Mr. William and Lady Alice Scrotton had taken a large house in Berkeley Square, the small amount of interest that still remained in my mind evaporated. Evidently a crank and an impostor, I decided, who had for some reason only known to himself decided to interrupt the ceremony, and had then pitched me a fantastic yarn to save himself from being handed over to the police.

Well—you know who I am; you know that I went out with Perrin's Antarctic Expedition. You know that we were lost for months, and that we only returned two days ago. As far as the events of the world are concerned I've been dead for over two years. And now you're beginning to understand my dilemma, aren't you? But I'll tell it to you in my own way. Since it happened a year ago, your own memory may be a little rusty.

I went to the club for luncheon the day after my return. And I fed with Carruthers, the Gunner. We talked of men and matters, and it wasn't till we were in the smoking-room with cigars and a double old brandy—as befitted a returned wanderer—that he happened to mention Lady Alice Selby.

"And who the deuce is Lady Alice Selby?" I asked.

"Good heavens, man," he laughed. "I'd forgotten that there are no papers in the Antarctic. Scrotton's widow: Lakington's daughter."

"Scrotton's widow!" I gasped. "You mean Scrotton is dead?"

"Somewhat naturally, in order to possess a widow," he answered. "It's a year ago now. He was brutally murdered. Why—great Scott! man, what is the matter with you? You're as white as a sheet."

"Begin at the beginning," I said, "and tell me all about it."

"Well, there really isn't very much to tell," he answered. "And I wouldn't swear to remembering all the details. It seems that Scrotton was found dead on the floor of one of the downstairs rooms in his house one night. He'd been stabbed through the heart with some knife or other——"

"A pointed stiletto?" I remarked.

"Now you mention it, I think you're

right," he said, with a smile. " Been reading blood and thunder stuff down South to keep you warm, I suppose ? However, it appears that some down-at-heels fellow must have done it. Lady Alice practically caught him in the act. A ghastly thing for her—poor woman. Of course, I know that the marriage was hardly a love-match, but it's a bit over the odds to come suddenly into a room and find your husband lying dead in a pool of blood, with the murderer standing over him."

" She screamed—naturally ? " I said.

" Oh, yes ! Like blazes. And the fellow made a dive through the window and landed straight in the arms of a policeman. Really rather fortunate that one happened to be there at that hour of the night."

" Yes," I agreed. " Sussex Place is a bit deserted round about midnight."

He nodded, and then he looked at me curiously.

" But how the deuce did you know it happened in Sussex Place ? Because, now I come to think of it, they had only just moved there from Berkeley Square."

" A lucky shot," I answered, quietly. " Tell me, Carruthers—who and what is Selby ? "

" A fellow in the 10th Lancers," he said. " A very decent chap. And, strictly between ourselves, I don't think there was much doubt—even during the late Mr. Scrotton's lifetime—that he and Lady Alice were rather more than friendly. Of course, that must go no farther, and they're married now. But—well, you know."

" What happened to the man ? " I said.

" They found him guilty and sentenced him to death," he answered. " And then he went mad or something—I forget exactly what it was. Anyway, I know he wasn't hanged, and I think he's in Broadmoor."

I FINISHED my coffee, and a few minutes later I left the club. I felt I wanted to be alone to think things out. The whole affair was so utterly staggering; one had no previous experience to measure it by. And it was as I was fumbling with my latch-key that the final blow was dealt me. A woman darted across the street and, laying her hand on my arm, said : " Thank God ! you've come back at last ! "

I gazed at her dully.

" Who are you ? " I said, though I knew the answer before she spoke.

" I'm Mrs. Landon," she answered. " And now we can prove his innocence."

" So his name is Landon, is it ? " I remarked. " You'd better come inside."

" If you knew how I've scanned the papers," she said, as she sat down. " Waiting, watching day by day for your return. You see, he didn't know your name ; only the address. And then when it happened I came round here at once. He'd told me that he'd told a stranger of his dream, and I knew that if I could get at you it would be all right. And then I found you were in the Antarctic. Oh ! I nearly went mad. But now it's going to be all right. He's not mad really ; you and I know that. But they've put him in Broadmoor, because he went on talking about his dream. And he was queer. But I can nurse him all right ; I know my Bill. And once that devil of a woman is found guilty and hanged, he'll get all right again. It's the feeling that he's innocent and that no one believes it that is doing all the trouble. Come ; let's go now to the Home Secretary or someone and tell him everything."

" But look here, Mrs. Landon," I said desperately, " what reason did he give for entering the house at all ? "

" Just that something stronger than himself took him there," she cried. " I've told you he's queer ; you know it as well as I do. He's fey—at times. Why, look at the dream itself. It's come true in every detail. Oh ! come," she went on in an agony ; " come at once. Can't you see what every extra minute of a hell on earth like Broadmoor must mean to him—for it must be a hell on earth if you're not mad ? I want to get him out ; I shall go mad myself if I don't."

SHE had risen, and, as I still sat on in my chair, a dreadful suspicion dawned in her eyes.

" You've got the paper, haven't you : the paper you promised to send to your bank ? "

" I think so," I temporized. " Yes—I'm sure of it."

I had to say it—poor soul, she was on the rack.

" But it's too late to get it this afternoon," I went on. " Only, for Heaven's sake, Mrs. Landon, don't build too much on it. There are difficulties—well-nigh insurmountable difficulties."

I've seen scorn on a person's face before, but I've never withered under such a look as the one she gave me.

" Difficulties ! " she almost gasped. " What do you mean—difficulties ? Don't you realize that that foul woman murdered her husband to get his money and to be free to marry her lover ? And she goes free while my Bill is in Broadmoor. Difficulties ? You're mad."

She turned away to control herself ; then she faced me again.

" I've said nothing," she went on, quietly.

"Oh! come," she went on in an agony; "come at once. I want to get him out; I shall go mad myself if I don't."

"The truth has been trembling on the tip of my tongue a score of times, but I've bitten it back. I've realized that no one would believe me: that I should do more harm than good. But with you—it's different. There's no reason why they should disbelieve you—you who hold the proof in that paper. To-morrow morning I'll come back. You'll have the paper by then, and we'll go together and get him out."

And then she left me.

IT'S midnight now, and I'm still as far off a solution as ever. What on earth am I to do? The more one looks at the matter, the more utterly damnable does it become.

I know perfectly well what I should say were I in the position of the Home Secretary and somebody came to me with such a story.

I should say—"Most interesting; but what does it prove? On your own showing

this man is queer in the head—if not mad. He dreams a dream—a very vivid dream. In that dream he sees a murdered man and a woman—both strangers to him. Six months later he states that he saw these two people being married. Am I really to understand that this man remembered two dream faces over such a period of time? No, sir—common sense gives me a totally different solution. He thought he saw a likeness, and the thought grew to a fixed belief. It amounted to an obsession in his brain, so that he literally had to act along the lines of that obsession. You say yourself that something stronger than himself forced him into the house that night. To me that sounds remarkably like insanity; certainly no normal man would have done it. He was insane when he went there, and I see no reason to doubt that in his insanity he killed Scrotton himself. So he will remain where he is."

That's what I should say, and ninety-nine men out of a hundred would say the same thing. So what am I to do?

If I take that paper to the authorities, the whole thing will be made public. Mrs. Landon will see to that. I am convinced that we shall not benefit Landon, and I shall be in the pleasing position of having accused Lady Alice of murdering her husband. I don't like her, I admit—but her friends are mine also.

So what am I to do?

If I thought—honestly and conscientiously—that there was a chance of getting him out of it, I wouldn't hesitate. But I don't.

And yet, in my own mind, I'm certain he's innocent. The prophecy of Sussex Place must be more than a mere coincidence. Only I can imagine a clever lawyer on the point!

He's innocent; but it will take more than a dream to prove it. And without proof—what's the use?

I got the paper from the bank, and I've held a lighted match near it several times already. Wouldn't it be kinder in the long run?

In fact, at the moment my only coherent thought is that I wish I were still in the Antarctic.

ACROSTICS.

HASTINGS
ENVELOP
A A
ROUNDHEAD
T T
STITCHES

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 163.
(The Third of the Series.)

A SUIT on either side, the red one leads;
On either side a suit, the black succeeds.

1. A famous battle, centuries ago,
   Where fatal arrow laid the Saxon low.
2. Surround, enwrap, hide, cover, or enfold;
   One letter more, a letter it may hold.
3. The sister of the Skylark, may we say?
   Whom Wren and Fieldfare thus alike display.
4. Part is a circuit, part may be on beer,
   Antagonistic to the Cavalier.
5. Two thirds was half whose father was a Greek;
   The whole a garment tells us where to seek.
6. Nine may be saved by one, if 'tis in time;
   Bacon and trenches, both provide a rhyme.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 163 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on February 10th.*

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 162.
(The Second of the Series.)

GOOD-BYE, dear former, soon you must away,
Time his relentless course declines to stay.
Welcome, dear latter, come our land to cheer,
Whisper that brighter days will soon be here.

1. Eight sides it has, time past within it shows.
2. Right across France, into the Bay it flows.
3. With pictures, teeth, and corks it is concerned.
4. The day once vanished never has returned.
5. A quadruped, spelled either way the same.
6. Candied, a plant, also a maiden's name.
7. Like moon or planet, it goes round and round,
   And a most useful weapon may be found.

REMUS.

1. O	c t a g o	N
2. L	o l r	E
3. D	r a	W
4. Y	e s t e r d a	Y
5. E	w	E
6. A	n g e l i c	A
7. R	e v o l v e	R

THIRTY-THIRD SERIES: RESULT.

THE acrostics during the past series seem to have been generally harder than those published earlier in the year. Four solvers obtained full marks, and twelve others missed only one point. Arden, Forest, Mancu, and Roc, who answered all the acrostics correctly, win prizes of three guineas each, and will be ineligible for further success in the current series.

Arden is Mr. R. W. Bates, R.N. College, Dartmouth; Forest is Mr. P. E. Herrick, 40, Arodene Road, S.W.2; Mancu is Mr. L. A. Jones, Asterley, Goldsmid Road, Tonbridge, Kent; Roc is Mr. R. C. Oakley, Dunchurch Hall, Rugby.

THE TWO-SEATER

By

DENIS MACKAIL

Illustrated by
R. C. PETER

MRS. HUNTINGTON—no; let's call her Eve, then, since it will save us ten letters—woke up with that sudden and complete return to consciousness which is one of the signs of youth and good health, and smiled happily as she saw the sunlight streaming in between the interstices of her chintz window-curtains.

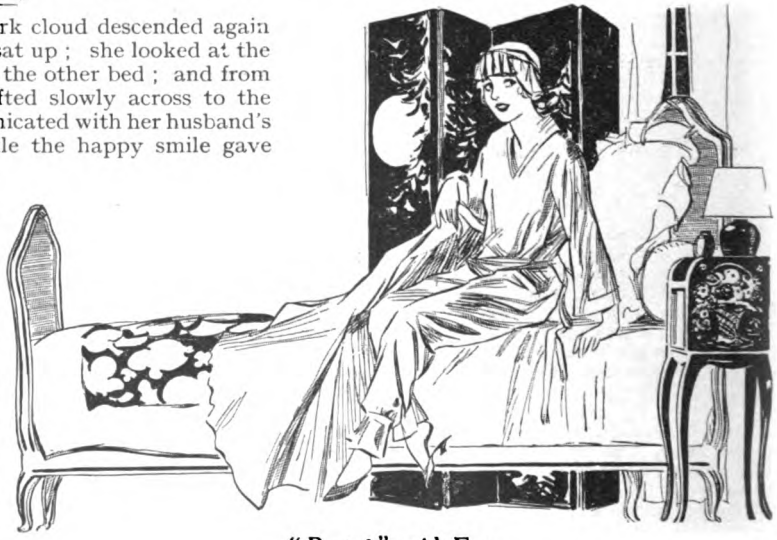
"Gerald?" she murmured, automatically. "Are you——"

And then the dark cloud descended again with a rush. She sat up; she looked at the smooth vacancy of the other bed; and from there her eyes drifted slowly across to the door which communicated with her husband's dressing-room, while the happy smile gave place to an expression of determination and displeasure.

The door was locked, with the key on her own side, but the expression of determination and displeasure seemed to pass through it like X-rays; nor was there any trace of sympathy for the occupant of the dressing-room—who might be thought by some to have deserved it, seeing that the rumpus had broken out after the servants had retired for the night, and that in consequence of this he had had to sleep without any sheets.

"Brute!" said Eve (or Mrs. Huntington), succinctly and passionately. And having thus assured herself that she was still quite as angry with Gerald (or Mr. Huntington) as she had been at twelve o'clock last night, she got up and tiptoed across to that significant door.

"There you are!" she informed her otherwise empty bedroom, after she had listened



"Brute!" said Eve.

for a moment with her head close to the panel. "He's asleep!"

The evidence of dead silence might have seemed insufficient to some people, since it is quite possible to be awake in a room by oneself without talking, coughing, groaning,

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or kicking the furniture. A more powerful or morbid imagination might equally have deduced that Gerald had hanged himself in the night, and was at that moment suspended by his braces from the other side of the significant door.

But Eve had jumped directly to the explanation which put her husband in the worst light. Having displayed the most insane and unfounded jealousy, having insulted his wife with the suggestion that her cousin Clifford might find somewhere else to live, and having lost his temper—oh, yes, of course he had lost his temper—he had then fallen fast asleep, and had remained fast asleep; while she——

She looked back at her own bed.

"While I," she muttered, with a singularly inaccurate memory, "never closed my eyes all night!"

This untruthful statement having done a good deal to refresh and fortify her anger, she left the communicating door and drew back one of the chintz curtains.

"Of course," she observed to the dew-spangled panorama which spread out over two counties; "of course I'm quite aware that poor Clifford has been with us for six weeks; but where else was he to go? He hasn't got any work, and he's hardly got any money, and Heaven knows it's lonely enough down here with Gerald in London all day. Naturally one's polite to one's first cousin."

No earthquake or volcanic eruption followed this extraordinary observation. As the dew-spangled panorama continued to smile back at Mrs. Huntington, she went over to her big looking-glass.

"I'm sure," she said, "that I've never done anything to encourage poor Clifford. I can't help it if he thinks I'm attractive; can I?"

The looking-glass had only one answer to give to this, and gave it at once.

"You're adorable," it said; for looking-glasses, though plain-spoken up to a point, take little interest in what happens outside their immediate range. They never exaggerate, but they are a poor symbol for Truth.

"Very well, then," said Eve. "I'm off."

"Off?" echoed that exquisite and luxurious bedroom. "Eve—Eve—where are you going?"

"To mother's, of course," said Eve. "After that—we'll see."

Some of the more up-to-date accessories on Mrs. Huntington's dressing-table—particularly a cut-glass scent-bottle which she had brought back from her honeymoon in Paris—seemed a little disappointed that she had not declared her immediate intention of bolting with her cousin Clifford. Perhaps they, also, found it a bit dull down here in the country, and were all for excitement at any cost. But the greater part of the room breathed a faint sigh of relief.

"Well, well," was the more general response; "it's a pity, but it might be worse. After all, you're very young, and your mother's a very sensible old lady. We'll still be here when you come back."

Mrs. Huntington turned her head quickly, almost as though she had heard this answer.

"I mean it," she said, defiantly. And she sat down at her ridiculous writing-desk, and snatched at her green-feather pen and her block of heliotrope paper.

"DEAR Gerald," she wrote; wrenched off the top sheet; threw it away; and began again with no more introduction than the word "Thursday"—it being, we perhaps need hardly say, an indubitable Friday.

"After what happened last night," she wrote, "and all your behaviour, it is obvious that things can't go on as they have been going on. It is obvious that no one who cared for anybody would behave to them like you. I have not slept a *wink!* I am going back to mother's, and shall have gone by the time you get this, because you don't seem to understand what is obvious, I should have thought. Please don't write to me, as I shall not open it.—EVE.

"P.S.—I am taking nothing but the two-seater."

And if that postscript didn't put her in the right, then what could? Cold-blooded analysis of the body of the letter might send a logician or grammarian straight to the padded cell; but there could be no dodging the import of that final sentence. The outraged wife, who had been publicly endowed with all her husband's worldly goods, was removing nothing from his establishment except her clothes—well, naturally—and her two-seater. She abandoned all claim to everything else—even her jewellery and her baby-grand—and if Gerald got any sympathy from anyone after that, then——

But of course he wouldn't. Why should he?

So Mrs. Huntington put the letter into an envelope, and fastened the flap, and thumped it decisively with the side of her fist. And then she attired herself rapidly in various simple but expensive garments which we need not describe—though not in her fur coat, because Gerald could keep that too. And then she unlocked the main door of the bedroom, and ran downstairs into the hall, and put the envelope in a conspicuous position on the hall-table. And then she flung herself through a green-baize door, and marched along a flagged corridor

—turning up her nose at the tempting scent of bacon—and emerged, more decisively than ever, into the stable-yard.

What a perfect day! What a—— Oh, bother! There was Hoskyns, the chauffeur, sluicing water from a hose-pipe over the two-seater itself.

"Good morning, Hoskyns. I——"

"Good morning, 'm. Lovely weather, 'm."

"Oh, lovely! I say, I'm afraid I——"

"Beg pardon, 'm?"

Why couldn't the silly idiot turn that tap off and stop clumping about in those monstrous boots? How could one hope to make oneself heard against all this noise—without shouting and attracting the attention of everybody indoors?

A happy inspiration suggested standing on the hose-pipe, and, as the water died away to a trickle, Mrs. Huntington managed to complete her message.

"I'm afraid I want the two-seater now, Hoskyns," she said.

"Now, 'm?"

The chauffeur looked puzzled, surprised, faintly indignant—as though people oughtn't to say things like that without warning him first.

"Yes," said Eve, sharply. "At once, please."

With a great effort Hoskyns appeared to master his incredulity, and to decide that he had heard Mrs. Huntington correctly.

"Very good, 'm," he replied, dropping the end of the hose-pipe. "Shall I bring her round to the front?"

"No," said Eve. "I've got to start immediately."

"Oh!" said Hoskyns, and this time as if he were defending himself from some slur on his character. And then, brightening a little: "Very good, 'm. I'll just——"

"What?"

"I'll just change my boots."

"But I don't want you to drive me," said Eve, painstakingly. "I'm going alone."

"Oh! I see, 'm. You're going alone?"

He seemed slightly offended now, as though he ought to have been told this at the beginning. But he was obliging enough to draw the convolutions of the hose-pipe out from between the wheels; and then he stood there, panting after this trifling exertion, while Eve took her place on the driver's seat.

"No bad news, 'm, I hope?" he added, with a sudden burst of curiosity.

"No, thank you," said Mrs. Huntington, coldly.

Then she stepped on the starter, the usual swift series of scientific miracles took place and the engine began to throb.

She could have wished that she had managed the first change—since she was conscious that Hoskyns was still staring at her—with less resemblance to the sound of a giant clearing his throat. But she slid into top with the precision of an expert; so triumphantly, indeed, that she had to turn her head to watch the effect on her critic. The result of this was that the near-side back wing grazed the edge of the water-butt at the corner of the yard. A faint shout came from the critic, but Eve's eyes were already on the roadway ahead. She accelerated violently, and the two-seater bounded up the long drive.

"Ah!" she said, settling herself more comfortably and drinking in the glory of the early morning and the steady hum of the four cylinders. "That's better."

Fortunately the lodge gates were wide open, and she dashed through without waiting for any display of feudalism on the part of the lodge-keeper. He might have seen her, or he might not. But in either case it would be a very long time before he saw her again.

Oh, a very long time indeed.

"HULLO, mother!" (Mrs. Huntington was only rehearsing this conversation, as it were, for the two-seater was still some way from the first long hill.) "Hullo, mother! I've come home."

Yes, that was a good enough opening. But what next?

"Have you, my dear?"

"Yes. Gerald behaved absolutely disgracefully last night. He lost his temper, and—he lost his temper——"

Wait a minute, though. This wanted putting carefully. For the tiresome thing was that her mother had never liked Clifford. The last time she had come over to lunch, she'd been quite rude to the poor boy. Asking him when he was going back to London, and why he didn't try to get a job, and if he thought six hundred a year was an excuse for doing nothing at all.

That was where mother was so unfair. As Clifford himself had said afterwards, six hundred a year wasn't nearly enough to live on, but with all this unemployment one couldn't go taking the bread out of other fellows' mouths. He'd been quite upset about it, poor Clifford! He'd had dinner in his bedroom that evening, and Gerald had said: "So he's gone, has he? Splendid!"

The brute!

Still, even mother couldn't expect one to be accused, or practically accused, of—well,

A happy inspiration suggested standing on the hose-pipe.

you know what. And Gerald *had* lost his temper. He'd gone out of the room and slammed the door. Bang ! Like that.

So why mention Clifford at all ?

" You don't understand, mother. There's no question of making it up, or getting him to apologize. We're just absolutely unsuited to each other."

Good ! That was it. Keep it vague like that, and no one could say anything. Unless Gerald himself——

Toot, toot !

Mrs. Huntington wrenched the wheel over, and wrenched it back again, just in time to avoid a light van that in the midst of this rehearsal had somehow escaped her attention. Disgraceful how these tradesmen drove about the roads, as though they belonged to them.

And she covered the next two hundred yards with her head turned well over her right shoulder, scowling at the dusty wake of the other vehicle.

" The police," said Mrs. Huntington, self-righteously, " ought to be told."

Then she turned her head back again, slid over to the proper side of the road again, and prepared to resume her soliloquy.

" Of course," she began, " if Gerald would only take a house in London, where I could *see* a few people——"

Hullo ! What was that ?

A loud explosion had just come from somewhere unpleasantly near. Mrs. Huntington eased up on the accelerator, and looked at the row of shining dials in front of her in a manner that might have deceived anyone but the dials themselves. Their needles continued to point in all sorts of directions, but if they were offering any comment on the cause of that explosion, then they had certainly failed to make it clear to the young woman at the wheel. For though the two-seater had covered nearly three thousand miles under her control and since her marriage, in her knowledge of internal combustion engines she was not notably in advance of Tubal Cain.

Could it have been a tyre ?

As a rough and ready means of answering this question, she accelerated again—waiting to see if there were any marked irregularity in the car's motion. There wasn't.

" Good ! " said Mrs. Huntington.

And instantly there were two more deafening reports, and the engine stopped altogether. For a moment the two-seater continued to glide forward ; then it slowed down, paused, and began to run backward.

"Bother!" said Mrs. Huntington, declutching, accelerating, advancing the spark, and finally jamming on the hand-brake. There was a high squeak, and the whole contraption fetched up with a jerk. In front was the long, steady rise of Buckleberry Hill. Behind was the long level stretch known—with rustic inaccuracy, since it measured approximately a thousand yards—as Pedlar's Mile. Overhead was the deep blue sky; and everywhere was the lazy, murmuring silence of a hot summer's day.

"Of course," said Mrs. Huntington, "this *would* happen."

Her mind's eye leapt forward and traversed the twenty miles which still separated her from her mother's house; turned round and considered the mile and a half which she had just covered. The two-seater was decorated with the badges of both the principal motoring organizations, and in the side-pocket was a sheaf of vouchers with which one of them guaranteed to "get you home." But the blue and khaki scouts never came down this by-road, and in any case her home was the very last place where Mrs. Huntington wished to be got.

What on earth had gone wrong?

She gazed at those enigmatic dials again, and with sudden decision pressed her foot on the self-starter. She tried hard to keep all trace of anxiety from her expression, because the engine mustn't for a moment suppose that she doubted it. But it saw through her bluff at once. The starter whirred and buzzed, but none of the other miracles ensued. The hot air still quivered over the radiator, but the two-seater itself had unmistakably given up the ghost.

AND then, far away at the top of Buckleberry Hill, a man appeared on a bicycle. He came nearer and nearer, and when he was about fifty yards away Mrs. Huntington started waving at him. He drew nearer still, and dismounted; revealing himself at close quarters as the clock-winder who came over once a week to do that which Gerald Huntington's large staff seemed incapable of doing for themselves. This was awkward, in a way; but, on the other hand, there wasn't, surely, such a vast difference between clocks and motors. Mrs. Huntington acknowledged his salutation, and stepped out into the road.

"I say," she went on, "do you know anything about cars?"

The clock-winder scratched his head, and stared at the example in front of him.

"Summut," he answered, thoughtfully; which being so far was also so good.

"Well, I can't start this one," said Eve. "I wonder if you'd mind looking at it?"

The clock-winder grunted, leant his bicycle against the grassy bank, and then produced a counter-proposal.

"How'd it be if I went on and told your shofoor, mum?" he suggested.

"No, no," said Eve, firmly. "I'm in a great hurry; I've got to get on at once."

"Ah!" said the clock-winder. "What's the trouble, mum?"

"Trouble?" Eve's face turned pink for a second, and then she laughed. "Oh, I see what you mean. Well, I was going along, you see, and it suddenly stopped."

"Ah!"

The clock-winder unfastened the catches at the side of the bonnet and lifted the metal covering.

"Um," he said, dubiously. "Won't start, won't she?"

"No," said Mrs. Huntington.

"Tricky things, motors," said the clock-winder, leaning over and tickling the carburettor. "Just try her now, mum."

So Eve got back on to the seat and trod once more on the self-starter button. The engine failed to respond, and she got out again.

"I wonder," she said, with a vague recollection of Hoskyns's behaviour with the big limousine on cold mornings, "if you could wind it up with that handle in front? That sometimes helps, doesn't it?"

The clock-winder shook his head.

"My brother-in-law broke his arm that way," he said, gloomily. "Four weeks in 'orspital, he was. I wouldn't risk it, mum."

"Oh, don't be ridiculous," said Eve. "A little car like this couldn't hurt you."

This appeal to the clock-winder's manhood had about as much effect as the self-starter. An obstinate look came over his dull features.

"That's all very well, mum," he said. "It was a littler car than this what broke my brother-in-law's arm. Now, if it was a clock——"

The lacuna was apparently meant to suggest that the clock-winder would tackle Big Ben single-handed, or alternatively had the courage to swing an aeroplane propeller, if only it told the time. Mrs. Huntington stared at him with all the contempt of the lady who flung her glove to the lions, but the situation remained unchanged.

"Very well, then," she said, coldly, "I shall have to do it myself."

And she walked round to the front of the two-seater, and she bent down, and——

"Oh!" she said, in frank astonishment. "There isn't a handle here at all."

What an extraordinary thing! Why had she never noticed that before? Surely all cars had starting-handles! Surely——

SHE stood up suddenly, as the sound of heavy boots came to her. This time it was the postman, who had approached from the other direction, and was pushing his scarlet bicycle up Buckleberry Hill.

"Good morning, mum," he said, touching the peak of his official cap. "Nice weather, mum."

"I dare say," said Eve, shortly. "You're very early, aren't you?"

"No, mum," said the postman. "It's nearly 'alf-past eight, mum. I'm a bit late, if anything."

Mrs. Huntington gave a gasp of annoyance, and looked back along Pedlar's Mile. Gerald must have read her letter by now, and supposing he came after her—— In the limousine. With Hoskyns. She turned urgently back to the postman.

"Do *you* know anything about cars?" she asked.

"Stopped, 'as it?" said the postman. "Something wrong, eh?"

"Yes, yes. I can't *think* what's happened, but it was *absolutely* all right when I started. And then suddenly it gave a big bang, and —well, it won't move now."

"My young brother's got a motor-bike," said the postman. "It's plugs generally with 'im."

"It's what?"

"Plugs," said the postman. "Get sooted up, you know."

"Ah!" said the clock-winder. "That's it, I reckon. "Plugs is what it'll be."

Mrs. Huntington turned her back on him.

"But can one *do* anything about it?" she asked the postman.

"I'll have a look, if you like, mum," he answered, leaning his bicycle against the back wheel. "Now, where would you keep your tools?"

Mrs. Huntington was unable to offer any suggestion, but after the postman had opened the dickey, and the clock-winder had prised the top off the box of accumulators, and Eve herself had peered into both side-pockets, the first of these searchers said that he could probably make do with the spanner belonging to his bicycle. He accordingly set to work on the four sparking-plugs with considerable vehemence, while Eve watched him with her eyes wide open, and the clock-winder watched him with his mouth wide open, and the squab-cushion on the front seat continued to hide the two-seater's own tools (and the

The postman set to work with considerable vehemence.

starting-handle) with its usual air of sublime sloth.

As the postman extracted each plug, he blew on it and rubbed it with his thumb, and wiped it on the seat of his trousers, and glared at it from a distance of about two inches. Then he handed it to the clock-winder, who did all the same things—as well as shaking it very close to his right ear; and then the clock-winder returned it to the postman, and the postman screwed it into its socket, and refixed the end of the cable from the distributor, and gave it a smack with the head of the spanner for luck; and finally, when he had done all this four times, he straightened his back and said: "There, mum. That ought to have settled them plugs."

"Do you mean it will start now?" asked Eve, withdrawing her gaze from the long perspective of Pedlar's Mile.

"Try it, mum," said the postman, without committing himself.

So Eve climbed back on to the squab-cushion, and pressed the starting-button, and the starter raced and roared, and the engine did nothing at all.

"That's queer," said the postman, shifting the angle of his peaked cap. "How'd it be if I got on my bike 'ere, mum, and went back and told your shuffer? Maybe it wants an over'aul."

"That's quite out of the question," she said. "But look here; do you think you two men could push it? They start then, sometimes, don't they?"

The two men shook their heads as one.

"Not up Buckleberry Hill, mum," said the clock-winder, with decision. "Not six men couldn't do that."

"Not a dozen," said the postman, stepping back and staring at the engine as though this fresh and more distant point of view might solve the mystery. And as he stood there, and the clock-winder gaped stupidly at Eve, and Eve struggled gamely with the onset of hysteria, *toot-toot!* and back came the light van.

The postman sprang forward, snatched at his bicycle, whirled it round himself, and dashed into the bank. The clock-winder danced to and fro, shouting: "Look out, there!" And the light van pulled up in a cloud of dust.

"Lady in trouble?" shouted a voice from the steering-wheel.

"Yus!" yelled the postman and the clock-winder.

"Right!" said the voice, which in tone, if not in accent, might have been that of a knight-errant. Two little side doors opened simultaneously, and two extremely dirty men bounded on to the highway.

BUT their very dirt filled Mrs. Huntington with confidence in their powers—let alone the fact that anyone who could drive that dilapidated van must surely be able to start a new car that had done barely three thousand miles. No bicyclists this time, thank Heaven; but genuine, competent, oily experts. The kind of men who could drive backwards round corners, replace their own inner tubes, and understand what policemen meant at cross-roads.

They flung off their coats, they waved the clock-winder and the postman aside, and in a trice they had lifted the squab-cushion and discovered the starting-handle and tool-kit. The pusillanimous clock-winder, still presumably thinking of his brother-in-law's mishap, screwed up his features in apprehensive agony as the knight-errants took it in turn to swing that starting-handle as no starting-handle had ever been swung before. The two-seater bounced about on its springs, its outline became duplicated and triplicated with the violence of that superhuman swinging; but nobody's arm was broken, nor did the engine give so much as a solitary pop.

On the other hand, the knight-errants seemed neither surprised nor cast down. If anything, it would appear that they were pleased to have met a problem so worthy of their technical skill. They exchanged muttered and unintelligible scraps of language, like two doctors collaborating on a diagnosis.

"Carburettor?" they said. "Plugs? Not a bit of it. It's a bigger job than that."

Continuing the medical analogy, it seemed now that they were in favour of what is known in Harley Street as an exploratory operation. One of them crawled under the chassis and started taking things to pieces down there, and the other embarked on a destructive analysis of the electrical equipment.

Possibly through habit acquired on their own driving-seat, they kept in touch with each other's activities at the tops of their voices.

"Where does this blue wire come out, George?"

"Got them pliers there?"

"Looks like big-end to me."

"She's shorting somewhere. That's what it is."

"No, 'tain't. Just 'elp me slack back this wing-nut."

"Compression."

"Garn! It's the plat'num point."

MRS. HUNTINGTON and the two bone-setters kept creeping up to the experts, and being swept away again—either by a convulsive movement from

the recumbent one's legs, or by his colleague suddenly swinging round to rid himself of a handful of valve-springs or the cover of the cut-out. The sun rose higher and the shadows grew shorter, and Eve grew hungrier every moment. Presently the postman reluctantly recalled his duty to the State, remounted his red bicycle, and wobbled off up Buckleberry Hill. Presently, again, the clock-winder, with equal deliberation, lifted his iron steed from the grassy bank and resumed his interrupted journey along Pedlar's Mile. And presently, once more, the horizontal van-driver, having replaced all that he had removed and deploring his inability to cut a hole through the undershield, came scrambling out, staggered to his feet, and resumed operations in conjunction with his partner.

"Induction's blocked. That's what it is, Fred."

"No, 'tain't. It's this 'ere make-and-break what's causing it all."

"If only I could get inside this 'ere crank-chamber."

"After you with that wrench, George."

And so on. For a long while the heap of metal fragments on the running-boards seemed, though constantly changing in detail, to remain unaltered in general bulk. But gradually it grew less. The experts grunted and wiped the sweat from their eyes, as they slowly reconstructed the original engine. Once they actually closed the sides of the bonnet, but Eve's heart sank as they opened it again to recover the jack, the grease-gun, and one of their hats —which in the best tradition of surgery they had left distributed among the two-seater's entrails.

And then, at last :—

"All right, George ?"

"Yus. All right now."

"Switch 'er on, then."

Click ! Mrs. Huntington rose from the grassy bank with a splitting headache, a crumpled ten-shilling note already in her hand, and advanced again towards her hard-working saviours. An outburst of gratitude trembled on her lips.

"Now, then," said George, grasping the starting-handle. "Steady does it."

And he began to crank like a demoniac street-organist. Eve held her breath. The two-seater once more quivered like a jelly. Fred worked the spark and throttle controls like a Marconi operator on a sinking ship.

And that was absolutely all that happened.

THE light van, richer by half a sovereign and poorer by the loss of that large puddle of oil which marked the spot where it had waited so long, turned the corner at the top of Buckleberry Hill, and so vanished from sight and hearing. Mrs. Huntington had first declined the offer of a tow, had then changed her mind and accepted it, and subsequently had been compelled to change her mind again, owing to the absence of any tow-rope. And so, as the knight-errants rode on their way, she sank, exhausted, on to the running-board, and she covered her face with her hands, and she shuddered and she gulped, and she felt weakly for her handkerchief, and——

"Hullo !" said a voice from the top of the grassy bank.

Eve was on her feet in a flash, as a man came hurtling through the hedge. He was dressed in ancient tweeds, and a leather strap over one shoulder supported the case of a folding camera. His hat was little short of shocking.

"Is it awfully late ?" he asked ; and now he was down in the road. He looked at his wrist-watch, and appeared stupefied. "Good Lord !" he exclaimed. "It's ten o'clock. No wonder I feel like breakfast !"

Eve stared at him—stupefied also.

"I've been out since seven—after those kingfishers," said Gerald Huntington. "I say"—he laughed a little nervously—"I hope you weren't worried, darling. It was awfully sweet of you to come out and look for me. I——"

And at this point his transparent countenance registered sudden recollection. The rumpus. The locked doors. The night in the dressing-room. His early exit from the dressing-room, to seek solace in the open air. Odd how the kingfishers had driven it all clean out of his head.

But poor Eve—of course she'd been scared to death, finding him gone like that. Why, she looked scared to death still.

"I——" he stammered again, realizing at the last moment how he must never admit what his face had already announced ; or would have announced to anyone but a wife who had her own recollections to cope with.

That letter ! She must have been mad to write it. Thank Heaven Gerald had gone out when he did. Thank Heaven the two-seater had broken down when it had. What had she been dreaming of, to suppose that mother would have backed her up for one moment ? And all for a boring idiot ; a stupid, lazy, sponging ape like Clifford !

"Gerald——" she began, emotionally.

"Yes, darling ?"

She had no idea what to say next ; but she must have said something, for he was answering her.

"No, of course I'm not going to London to-day. I—— Well, you opened my eyes

a bit last night, darling. The office can jolly well look after itself for a change. Do 'em all good. And—ah—as for your cousin——"

"Clifford! I'm sick of the sight of him!"

"What?"

"I *loathe* him, I tell you."

"I say—do you really? Let's—Eve, let's leave the blighter, shall we? Let's tell him we're going to—to Paris."

"And do it, you mean?"

"If you like. I say—do you remember our honeymoon?"

Mrs. Huntington nodded. Seeing that the honeymoon had been barely six months ago, one would almost have expected her to remember it. But the nod meant a great deal more than that.

"Come on, then," said her husband. "Let's go back and have some food."

He flung his camera into the dickey, and then on his way round the back of the two-seater towards the near-side door he suddenly stopped, bent down, and stood up again. His face blazed with righteous indignation.

"Look here," he said, angrily. "Do you mean to say that fool Hoskyns let you come out like this?"

"Like—like what, darling?"

Mr. Huntington pointed accusingly at the little dial on the petrol tank.

"Empty," he snorted. "Why, supposing you'd been going somewhere important; supposing you'd got stuck on one of these roads by yourself! My dear child, do you realize that your engine might have conked out half-way up Buckleberry Hill?"

Eve was on her feet in a flash, as a man came hurtling through the hedge.

He aimed a searching kick at the spare can on the running-board.

"Oh, well," he said, less passionately, "it's not as bad as I thought. Hop in, darling, and I'll fill her up. Still, I bet you'd never have thought of doing this by yourself. Eh?"

But Eve didn't answer.

"That was why Hoskyns shouted at me," she thought. "But I sha'n't say anything. If Gerald goes straight to the yard to curse him, it'll give me time to get that letter."

A chauffeur, after all, was only a chauffeur. But a husband——

"Right!" shouted Gerald from behind her.

She stepped on the starter for the last time that morning, and the engine purred merrily in the warm sun.

The Lounge Lizard

By

RALPH DURAND

Illustrated by
STANLEY LLOYD

MR. ERNEST BEST was very conscious of his superiority to the rest of mankind. As a man of ample private means he had a great contempt for people who could not afford to devote themselves, as he did, to the advancement of science, and consequently did not know the difference between a Brachicephalic and a Dolicocephalic skull. His powers of destructive criticism sometimes gave him opportunity to despise even his fellow-archæologists. In fact, he seldom met anybody to whom he was not in one way or another superior. Yet, although fully entitled to despise the generality of mankind, he laboured unceasingly to improve it, in that, having no defects of his own of which he was conscious, he never shirked the duty of showing others their faults, their weaknesses, or their mistakes.

On one occasion, when on a journey from Avignon to Rome to attend a congress of archæologists, he was stopped at the frontier by officials who found an informality in his passport. This imposed upon him the duty of pointing out the imbecility of the passport system in general and the ignorance of petty officials who could not understand that an eminent archæologist should not be hampered by restrictions designed to impede paupers, criminals, and other undesirables. The officials shrugged their shoulders and suggested that, while waiting for the British Consul-General to rectify the error in his passport, he would find the Mentone hotels comfortable. He preferred, however, to return a little farther and establish himself at Monte Carlo, a place in which he knew he could find ample opportunity to exercise his talent for disapproval.

The behaviour of the frequenters of the Casino was not quite what he expected. Instead of frenzied gamblers clutching piles of chance-won gold or staggering away ruined to commit suicide, he saw a number of very quiet people, mostly elderly, sitting at the green tables in silence, doing complicated sums on cards and occasionally staking a small sum on one of the safer numbers. The players seemed almost as bored as the croupiers, and but for the roulette wheels Mr. Best might have supposed that he had intruded on a meeting of a rural Parochial Council.

Somewhat disappointed at finding the Casino so decorous, he returned to the hotel he had chosen and there found most satisfying food for disapproval. The lounge was uncomfortably crowded with young people dancing instead of taking more wholesome exercise in the sunshine; worse still, among the dancers were people old enough to know better; worst of all, a young man, immaculately dressed and with most polished manners, was dancing, not with pretty girls of his own generation, but with elderly women who, in Mr. Best's opinion, would have been better employed at home attending to their household duties. Mr. Best had heard of "Lounge Lizards"—young men who earn as much as five hundred francs a day by dancing with women too unattractive to secure unhired partners—but he had never before seen one in the flesh. He hoped that he might find opportunity to tell the young man exactly what he thought of him.

His contempt grew as he watched the man. He behaved as if he were actually a servant of the hotel. He followed a lady out of the lounge and restored to her with a bow a vanity bag she had left in her seat.

He came to a waiter's assistance and assured an American that he had received correct change, and then fetched a time-table from the hotel office, and supplied information about trains that the waiter was too busy to supply. He heightened his offence in Mr. Best's eyes by doing these things, not as if they were duties that he was paid to discharge, but as if they were commonplace courtesies that any gentleman would do as a matter of course.

Presently the Lounge Lizard had the audacity to approach Mr. Best himself.

"The *portier* tells me," he said, "that you want to know how to get to the cave near here where they found remains of prehistoric man."

"And couldn't the man tell me himself?" demanded Mr. Best, acidly, "instead of sending you with the information?"

"He had never heard of it. The sort of people who come here don't know anything about that sort of thing."

That so contemptible a person as a lounge lizard should be interested in primitive man seemed to Mr. Best an insult to science.

"And what do you know about 'that sort of thing'?" he asked scornfully.

"Very little," admitted the Lounge Lizard, "but I think it is tremendously interesting to find skeletons and flint knives mixed up with charred mammoth bones as they did in the Garavan Cave. It sets me wondering how our ancestors cooked the mammoth, and still more how they cut him up, and most of all how they managed to kill the brute. That's why I ventured to introduce myself when the *portier* told me you had asked how to get to the Garavan Cave. You are interested in that sort of thing, aren't you?"

Mr. Best gave an answer such as might be given by a Prime Minister asked if he were interested in Politics or a Lord Chancellor if he knew anything about Law. But neither could have answered more pompously than he did.

"My name," he announced, pompously, "is Ernest Best."

Apparently the Lounge Lizard was so ignorant as never to have heard of Ernest Best, of the Royal Anthropological and various other scientific societies.

"My name's Thursoe," he said.

"Indeed!" said the archæologist, sarcastically. "I have never heard the name."

"If you really do know anything about the Stone Age and that sort of thing," continued the Lounge Lizard, quite unsnubbed, "I wonder if you would let me show you a cave that I stumbled across among the mountains behind here? It's so exactly like the Garavan Cave that there may be something tremendously interesting in it. The drawback is that it is difficult to get at—all among the mountain gorges, half a day's journey away. I wish you would let me show it you. We might excavate it together. I could make all arrangements about mules and so on."

"So that—in the improbable event of your cave turning out to be anything but a mare's nest—you could take the credit of the discoveries," sneered Mr. Best. "I have neither the time nor the inclination to join in the wild-goose chases of notoriety-hunting ignoramuses."

His manner was now so offensive that the thickest-skinned lounge lizard must have resented it. Thursoe turned away with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Oh, well, you can easily find the Garavan Cave if you want to," he said. "It is half a mile beyond where the Mentone trams stop."

ALMOST at once Mr. Best wished he had not dismissed the Lounge Lizard so curtly. His fellow-scientists sometimes hinted that they would think more of him if he made an original discovery of his own instead of belittling those of other people. He had always hoped that some day a stroke of luck would rank him among the discoverers of such rare jewels as the Heidelberg jaw or the Nebraska tooth. He had an uneasy feeling that by refusing to examine the Lounge Lizard's cave he might be throwing away the chance of a lifetime. At the very next opportunity he beckoned to Thursoe.

"About that cave of yours," he said. "It happens that I shall be detained two or three days in this beastly hole, so if you really want me to examine it I don't mind obliging you."

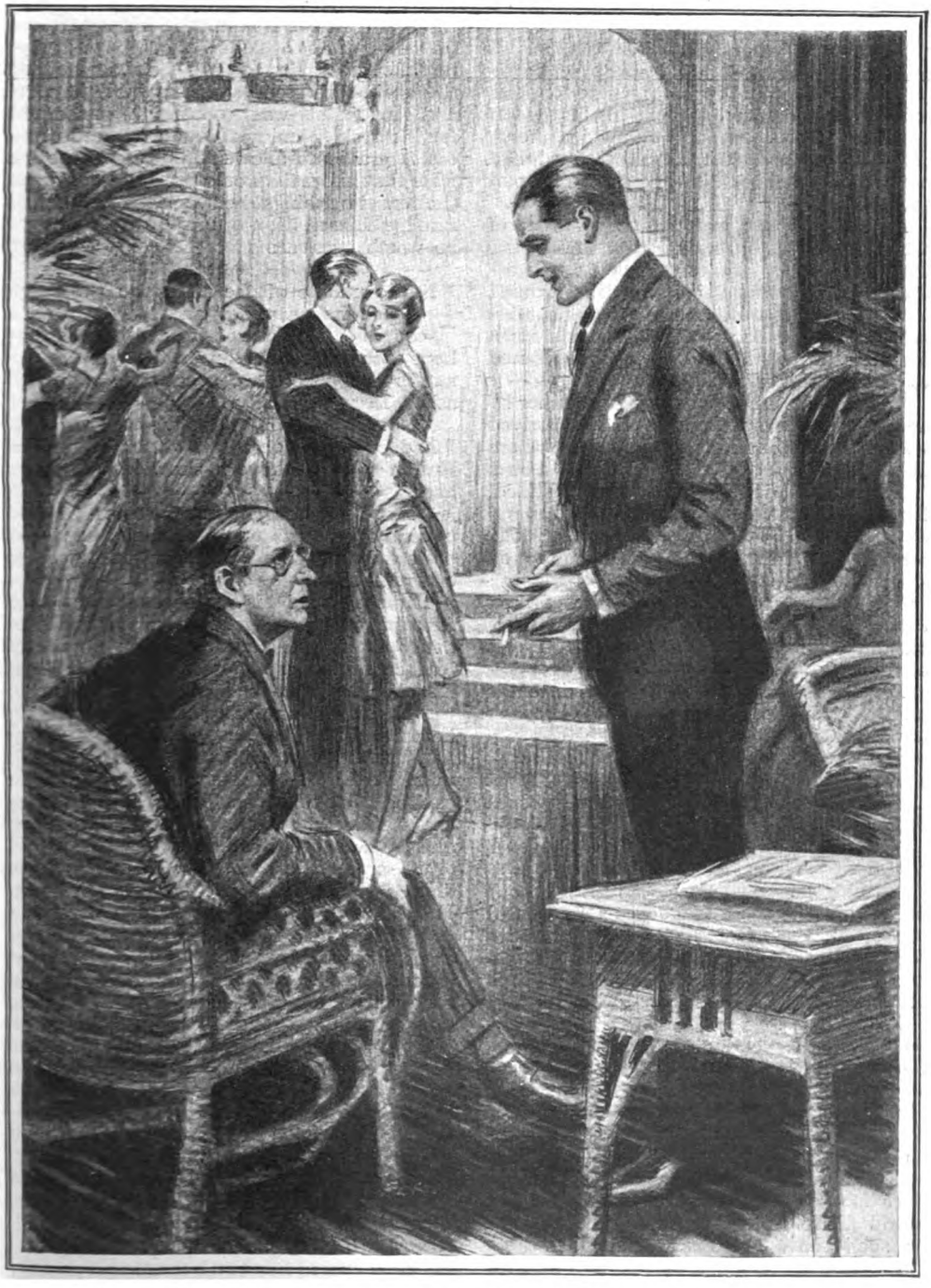
"Splendid!" said Thursoe, eagerly. "You won't mind roughing it a bit, will you?"

"I am an archæologist—not a counter-jumper."

"Of course," said Thursoe, not concerned to puzzle out the exact significance of the retort. "I thought I would just warn you that we shall have to sleep at a little *osteria*—and an *osteria* isn't exactly an hotel, you know. Will you be ready to start directly after lunch to-morrow? It'll take me till then to beat up mules and muleteers."

"On this distinct understanding—that no one here knows I am going with you," said Mr. Best, unconsciously preparing the way for his own discomfiture. "I have no wish to be chaffed at the Royal Societies Club for chasing moonshine in the company of a—a——"

"Silly ass like me," suggested Thursoe. "That's all right. And if we find anything it's your own kill, of course. All I want is the fun of the hunting."



"The *portier* tells me that you want to know how to get to the cave near here where they found remains of prehistoric man."

AFTER lunch next day, Mr. Best took elaborate steps to conceal his next movements from anyone through whom a report of them might reach the ears of jealous colleagues. He paid his hotel bill—its total gave him opportunity to express himself quite eloquently—put his luggage in the hotel cloak-room, and climbed a steep, cobbled lane that the Lounge Lizard had pointed out to him, till he had passed beyond the town.

He sat down to wait on the parapet of a bridge, half as old as the Roman Empire, that spanned a dry torrent-bed. Bright-eyed, grubby little children importuned him vainly for sous, flies buzzed about his heat-moistened face, the Lounge Lizard was long in overtaking him, all contributed to heighten his natural ill-humour.

"Villainous crew you've got together!" he grumbled, when Thursoe at last arrived with three mules and three muleteers, whom he introduced as Marco, Henri, and Piero.

The remark, if ungracious, was justified. None of the muleteers had shaved for several days, and their clothes, by years of long service, had long since earned repose on a dust-heap.

"They are good fellows in spite of their looks," said Thursoe. "I've known them off and on for years. They are rather pals of mine."

Mr. Best grunted as he climbed into the saddle. Then, as Marco seemed to consider it necessary to lead the mule, he told him sharply in French to let her have her head. Thursoe repeated the order in a dialect that sounded like Italian spoken with a French accent.

"You'll have to let me interpret for you," he said. "These fellows can't speak anything but their own native patois. I have found that the more languages a Mentonese can speak the more likely he is to be a rogue, so when I go off on an exploring trip I always employ unsophisticated mountaineers."

It was not long before Mr. Best wished he had left the steering of the mule to Marco. She paid no heed whatever to his yanking at the bit, but took her own line, sauntering unconcernedly on the extreme edge of the path at the most precipitous places and jerking herself up terrifyingly steep short cuts. Sometimes, when her head and her tail were in an almost perpendicular line, she would pause to browse on a tuft of grass. At such times Mr. Best could do nothing but grip the pommel of his saddle with both hands and look foolish.

They passed beyond the zone where lemons grew in the terraced orchards, beyond the grey-green olive groves, beyond the higher level where the sweet chestnut grew, to an altitude where only heath, myrtle, and the scarlet-fruited arbutus clung to the steep mountain-side. Always far below them sparkled the blue sea, and far above their heads the bare, saw-edged mountain-tops stood stark against the sky. But Mr. Best was too much concerned for his neck to enjoy the scenery, and when easier gradients allowed him to forget his fears that his girths would break he rehearsed the caustic things he would say to the Lounge Lizard if his cave proved not to be worth excavating.

IN the middle of the afternoon the track dipped into a valley and led towards a couple of tiny stucco-fronted houses that kept each other company in the waste.

"Is this where we spend the night?" asked Best, hopefully.

"No. This is a frontier station. I thought I had explained that our *osteria* is on the Italian side. We have to show our passports here."

"But I haven't got my passport. I had to send it to Paris to be endorsed or visaed or something by some jack-in-office or other."

Thursoe urged his mule to a trot, went forward and conferred with a man in dusty light blue uniform, with a cock's feather in his cap and a rifle slung from his shoulder, who had come out of one of the houses to bar their passage. Presently he trotted back again.

"It's all right," he said. "He doesn't mind letting us through as we shall be coming back this way. I told him I am on the staff of the British Embassy in Paris and he was quite satisfied."

"I expect a tip of a few lire would have done instead of a lie," said Mr. Best. He was almost sorry that the official had not turned him back, not because he had any punctilious respect for frontier regulations, but because he was regretting he had started on the expedition. He was hungry, thirsty, saddle-galled, and stiff in every limb, and he went on only because he supposed the inn at which they were to spend the night was considerably nearer than the hotel he had left at midday.

He had some experience of French country inns. Recently, while examining Roman remains near Avignon, he had stayed at one that was as comfortable as it was cheap. The floor of his bedroom had been bare, but his bed had been spotlessly clean. The food offered him had been simple, but the wine had been sound and the omelettes the work of an artist. He cheered himself so much with memories of that inn that he did not realize that they had come to the end of the day's journey when, just as the

sun was dipping, the Lounge Lizard dismounted at the door of a solitary, half-ruined, barnlike building.

"What are you stopping at this filthy hovel for?" he demanded. "I want to push on to the inn and get something to eat."

Thursoe's manner had been polite at their first meeting; it had been polite ever since; but throughout the afternoon his desire to please had become steadily less apparent.

"This is the inn," he said, and actually chuckled.

"But how does an inn come to be here? There isn't another habitation for miles."

"I've always felt that it would be tactless to ask," said Thursoe, "but as it is so close to the frontier and in so lonely a place my firm conviction is that it is patronized principally by smugglers."

Mr. Best dismounted and looked through one unshuttered window after another. He saw first a room containing a fireplace, a rough deal table, some benches, a cupboard, and a few dejected-looking fowls. In the next room he saw a huge bedstead spread with tattered sacks, but no other bedroom furniture whatever. The next window opened on to a stable, in which a ladder gave access to a hay loft.

"Where am I to sleep?" he demanded, petulantly.

Thursoe's smile was now so broad that it might almost have been described as a grin.

"The padrone is an hospitable soul," he said. "He'll probably offer you his own bed—without extra charge. But if you take my advice you'll sleep with me and Marco and the others in the hay. I've got a notion that it's cleaner. There's plenty of room for us all."

"I'll take the bed," said Mr. Best, promptly. "Where does one wash."

"One doesn't. Water is scarce up here. As there are no streams and no wells they have to save what rain-water they can store for mules that happen to come along. In places like this people learn to get along without water. The padrone's vineyard gives him wine to drink and his olives oil to cook with."

Mr. Best shooed a fowl off a bench and sat down wearily.

"Tell the padrone to hurry up," he said. "I'm hungry."

The padrone received the order with a gesture intended to express delight at being of service, and began to bustle about. He placed on the table a very large loaf of very stale bread, a junk of cheese, the colour of sandstone and very nearly as hard, a mug, and a flagon of golden-coloured wine. Then he stepped backwards and looked as if he expected an expression of approval and thanks. Not receiving it, he pondered for a moment and produced from the cupboard a chipped enamel plate and a jack-knife. As Mr. Best still seemed uninterested he dashed out of the room, returned with an armful of brushwood, threw it on to the fireplace, and set it alight. The room filled with acrid smoke and Mr. Best went outside.

"Tell me when supper is ready," he said, and added bitterly, "if it ever is."

At the far end of the house under a trellised vine were a skittle alley and a bench. There, though the air was already chilling, he sat down to wait, looking down on a view that many people would have thought worth the toil he had endured. Three thousand feet below him—it looked as if he could have tossed a pebble into it—the violet-black sea stretched away to an horizon that was girdled with the dull scarlet glow of the dying sunset. From San Remo in the east to Nice in the west all the Rivieran towns were lighting their lamps. Behind him, right above his head, the jagged edge of the mountain crest flushed pink against a sky more gorgeously purple than any emperor's robes. In such a place great thoughts would have come to a great mind. Mr. Best could think only of his aches and his hunger. Because bodily discomfort always frayed his temper he rehearsed in his mind sarcastic remarks that he might make on the inefficiency of the Lounge Lizard's arrangements for his entertainment.

It was the padrone who beckoned him in to the table at which Thursoe and the muleteers were already seated.

"Are these ruffians going to eat with us?" he demanded.

"Unless you ask them to go away," answered Thursoe. "I'm not going to. They're friends of mine."

Mr. Best snorted contemptuously as he took his seat.

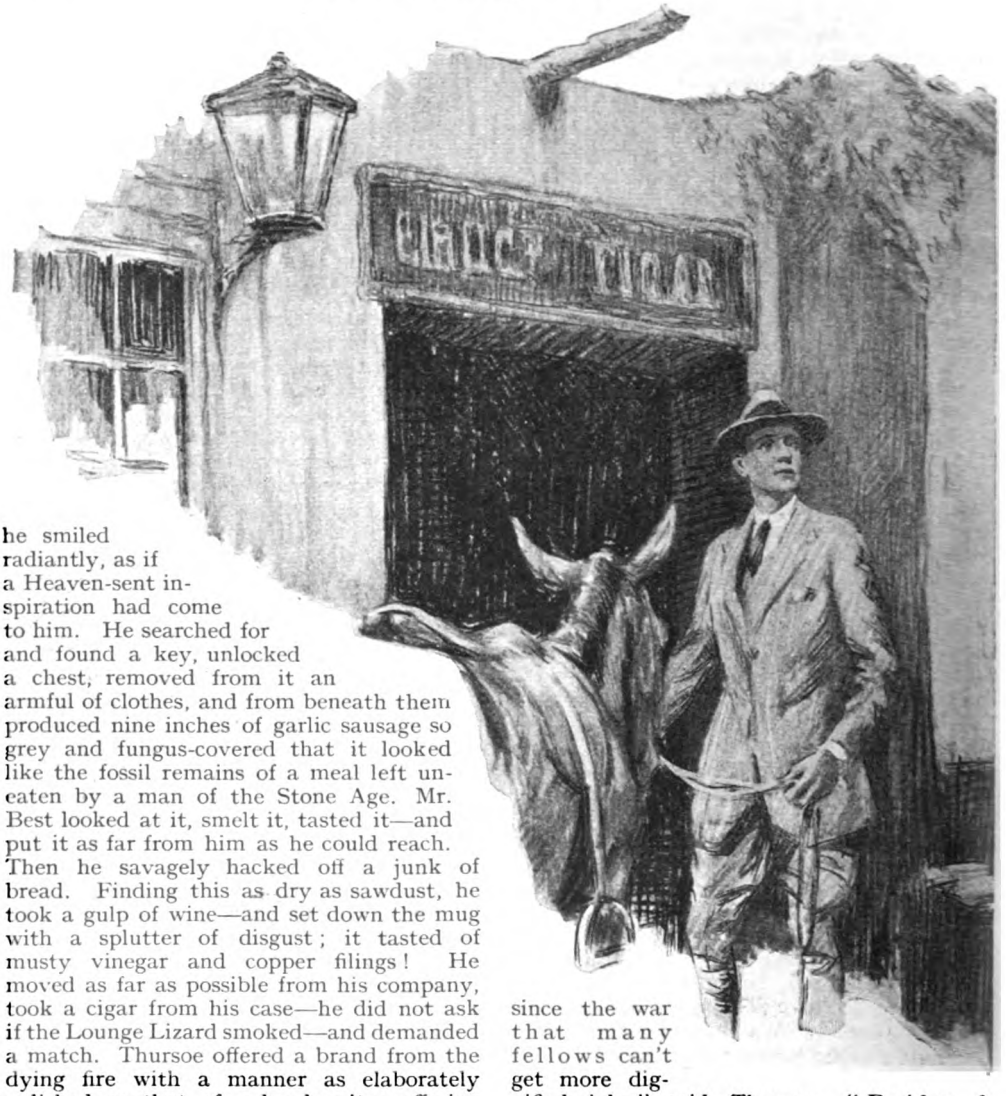
"What is there to eat?" he demanded.

"Roast chestnuts—the staple food of the local peasant except when water is plentiful, and then he boils them. The padrone did not offer it at first as he regards bread and cheese as more suitable for guests of our distinction."

A roast chestnut, unless its appearance gives rise to suspicion of grubs at its heart, is not unpalatable, but a score of them will clog any but the most uncritical appetite; after that surfeit begins. Mr. Best forced himself to eat more than a score, but was still conscious of a void that clamoured to be filled.

"Is this all we are going to get?" he demanded.

The padrone seemed to guess the meaning of the question. He looked distressed. Then



he smiled radiantly, as if a Heaven-sent inspiration had come to him. He searched for and found a key, unlocked a chest, removed from it an armful of clothes, and from beneath them produced nine inches of garlic sausage so grey and fungus-covered that it looked like the fossil remains of a meal left uneaten by a man of the Stone Age. Mr. Best looked at it, smelt it, tasted it—and put it as far from him as he could reach. Then he savagely hacked off a junk of bread. Finding this as dry as sawdust, he took a gulp of wine—and set down the mug with a splutter of disgust; it tasted of musty vinegar and copper filings! He moved as far as possible from his company, took a cigar from his case—he did not ask if the Lounge Lizard smoked—and demanded a match. Thursoe offered a brand from the dying fire with a manner as elaborately polished as that of a head-waiter offering a match to a lady of title. Mr. Best lighted his cigar, tossed the brand back into the fire, braced his shoulders, and prepared to discharge his accumulated venom.

"I think," he said, slowly and deliberately, "that there is no more contemptible creature to be found than a man who dances for hire with elderly women. I am given to understand that it is now quite a recognized profession. I am told that practically every fashionable hotel on the Riviera keeps a young parasite for that particular purpose. Before I would degrade myself like that I would earn a living by sweeping the streets or seek my daily bread in refuse bins."

"But the world has been so upside down since the war that many fellows can't get more dignified jobs," said Thursoe. "Besides, I happen to know that many of the men who do it on the Riviera were broken in health by the hardships of the war and have to live in a sunny climate. What else is there for them to do?"

"You needn't expect me to believe that your health was broken in the war."

"We weren't talking about myself," said Thursoe, patiently.

"But you dance for hire. I saw you dancing at the Hotel Splendide with women so unattractive that no man would dance with them for choice."

Thursoe flushed.

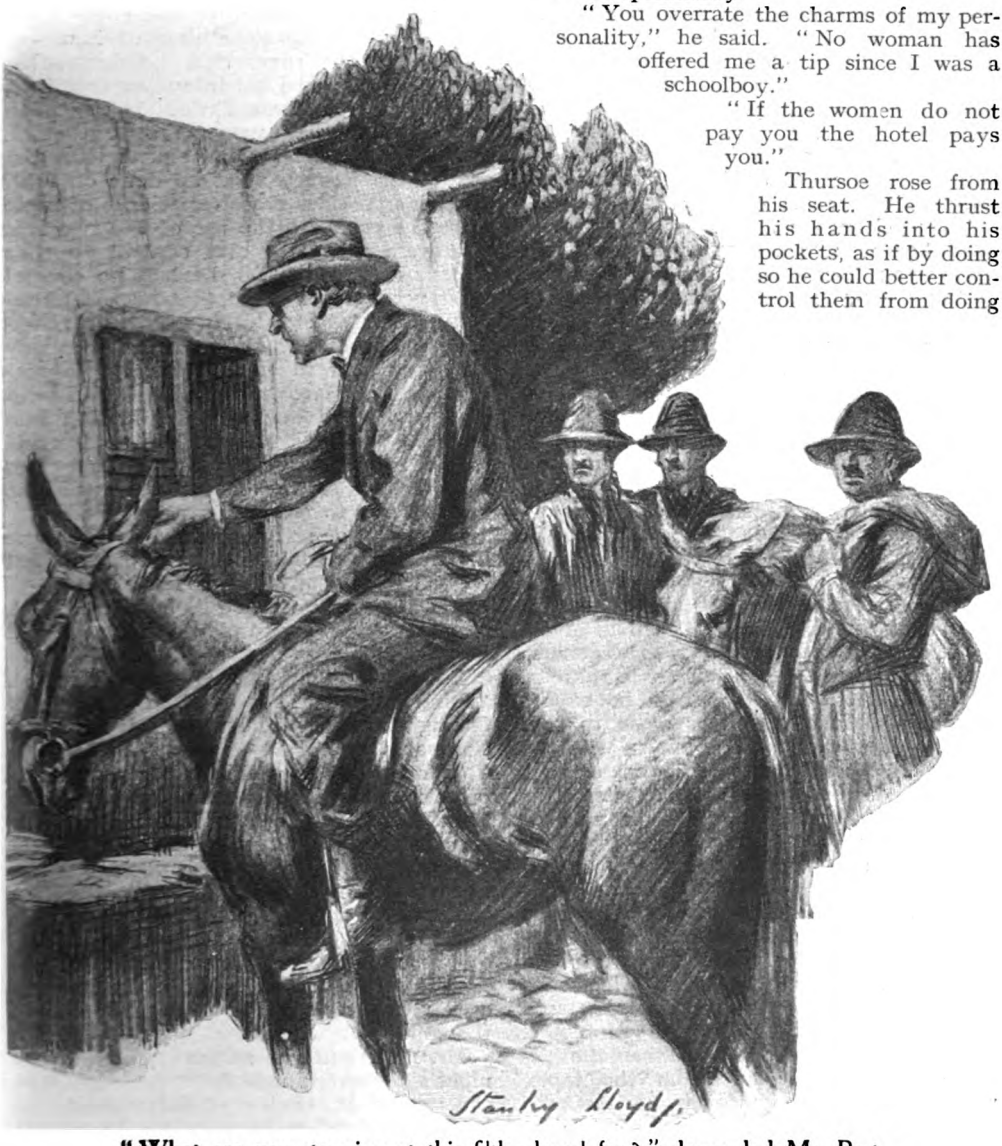
"Why I dance with them is entirely my own affair," he said. "But as you seem interested I will admit that my motive was

Thursoe flushed still more and laughed —not pleasantly.

"You overrate the charms of my personality," he said. "No woman has offered me a tip since I was a schoolboy."

"If the women do not pay you the hotel pays you."

Thursoe rose from his seat. He thrust his hands into his pockets, as if by doing so he could better control them from doing



"What are you stopping at this filthy hovel for?" demanded Mr. Best.

common-or-garden courtesy. Perhaps it doesn't occur to you that a man may be sorry for a woman who wants to dance and finds that no one wants to dance with her."

"Nothing of the sort would occur to me. You are merely quibbling. I don't suggest that you have any recognized tariff, but no doubt you have some tacit arrangement by which those you dance with give you a substantial tip or something of that sort."

that which in a cooler moment he might regret.

"I think," he said slowly, "that you have forgotten that you are my guest."

It is possible that if Mr. Best had realized that he was not expected to pay his share of the cost of the expedition his criticisms of Thursoe's arrangements would have been less pungent. But it was too late to soften them, and he was a type of man who does not find it easy to apologize. He preferred to pay.

"I don't accept favours," he said, offensively. "On our return, if you will give me an account of what you have had to pay for the hire of mules and men, and for the perfectly execrable food I have had, I will pay it and add whatever I consider a suitable fee for your very inefficient services."

Thursoe took a few impatient steps up and down the room, as if it was only by an effort that he could control himself.

"That clears the air," he said. "Now I know how we stand. I'm afraid you'll find my terms rather high. I don't do this sort of thing for hire unless I'm well paid for it."

"I shall pay you a reasonable fee and no more," said Mr. Best, firmly. "If we have any dispute about it I shall go to Cook's office—Cook is my banker, I may tell you—ask what is the usual day's pay for one of their interpreters, and give you not a sou more than that."

Thursoe shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, well," he said, "we'll discuss it in the morning."

HE climbed to the loft, made himself a nest in the hay, lined it with his great-coat, and lay down. He had gone to bed at such an early hour merely to rid himself of Mr. Best's society. He did not expect to sleep till the muleteers came to bed, because they were playing morra with the padrone. Morra, played in South Europe since the days of Nero, remotely resembles the game known in English nurseries as "Up-Jenkins." Both games are played by holding up several fingers of the hand and challenging an opponent to count their number. In English nurseries where nurses are indulgent and children spoiled Up-Jenkins may be played with a certain amount of noise. In Italian wine-shops morra is never played without noise enough to justify the reading of the Riot Act. Disputes frequently arise, and then the disputants slap their hands on the table, wave their arms, splutter in each other's faces, and call each other cheats and liars loudly enough to make sleep impossible for anyone under the same roof.

Presently Thursoe heard the padrone's heavy bedstead being dragged across the earthen floor of his bedroom, and guessed the cause. Mr. Best, alarmed by the quarrelling and the too frequent passing of the padrone's flagon of sour wine, was taking the most effective means that occurred to him of ensuring that his throat should not be cut during the night. Thursoe chuckled as he settled himself to sleep.

Terror drove sleep from Mr. Best's prickly, maize-husk pillow, but in the morning the muleteers smiled so sunnily and treated him so deferentially, the Lounge Lizard was so optimistic about their chances of finding something of immense interest in the cave, that he forgot his fears and dismissed his intention to return immediately to Monte Carlo. His decision to go on to the cave was strengthened, moreover, by the announcement that the rest of the journey must be done on foot. After his previous day's experience of mule riding he preferred the use of the two legs that were under his own control to that of four legs over which he had no control whatever. He regretted that he had abandoned the idea of returning without examining the cave when he found that the way they now had to go was largely perpendicular; but Marco, though burdened with a knapsack full of provisions, hauled him from above, and Piero, who had a pick and shovel to carry, guided his groping toes from below, so that never quite did he decide flatly to refuse to go any farther.

But when at last they came to the cave his trained eye told him at a glance that he had made the journey for nothing.

"Is this the place?" he demanded, "or are you trying to play a silly practical joke on me?"

"This is the place," said Thursoe. "Surely we might dig on the off-chance of finding something? It's exactly like the Garavan Cave."

"You might as well look for remains of primitive man here as look for turnips in Trafalgar Square," snorted Mr. Best, contemptuously. "Anyone with the most rudimentary knowledge of geology could have told you that the deposit of soil on the cave floor is, geologically speaking, quite recent."

"I'm really sorry that I have brought you here on a fool's errand," said Thursoe, apologetically. "Upon my honour I thought——"

Mr. Best, still sore at the memory of the night's discomforts and fears, embittered by the loss of his chance of fame, would not listen.

"Don't talk such utter rot," he snarled.

Thursoe flushed.

"I won't," he said. "Since you won't accept my apology I withdraw it—unreservedly."

"You came to me with your story of a cave worth excavating," continued Mr. Best, "so as to get me to hire you as a guide in the hope of getting an exorbitant fee out of me."

Thursoe sat down, selected a cigarette from his case, tapped it on his thumb and lighted it.

"In my interest in the cave I had almost

forgotten," he said, "that we were to discuss the matter of my wages this morning. My charge is two thousand francs a day. That, of course, includes the hire of the mules and everything."

"Talk sense," said Mr. Best, sharply.

"I dislike argument," said Thursoe. "My charge is now three thousand francs a day."

"Do you think that I am a man to be played with?"

"You are certainly not a man whom I should choose for a playmate." Thursoe settled himself more comfortably and watched the smoke from his cigarette rise in blue spirals towards the roof of the cave. He looked as if he were thoroughly enjoying himself.

"Listen," he continued. "When you saw me at the Hotel Splendide you jumped to the conclusion, natural perhaps to a man of your type of mind, that I was a lounge lizard. Although you were quite wrong in supposing that I was dancing for hire, it is true that I was at the hotel for business purposes. I was, in fact, looking for a victim to rob. I did not select you as a victim because, in spite of my admitted ignorance of the subject, I really did want some expert to come and examine this cave. I really intended to put business aside for once, and—it was a pity I did not make myself more explicit—I really meant you to be my guest on this expedition. Since you refuse to consider yourself as my guest, I am at liberty to profit by our meeting and regard you as my victim."

"I don't know what on earth you are talking about."

"Don't you? Don't you understand that, far from being a lounge lizard, I am a member of a more ancient and more romantic profession? I am a brigand."

With a great effort Mr. Best imitated the laugh of a good-humoured man who enjoys being chaffed.

"I thought that the—er—brigand industry died out a century ago."

Thursoe delicately flicked the ash from his cigarette with the nail of his little finger.

"I revived it. I told you yesterday that the world was so much upset by the war that many men on being demobilized could not get decent jobs. I myself realized that to pay my way I must either invent a new industry or revive an old one. I hadn't the brains to invent a new industry, so I decided to revive brigandage."

Mr. Best's expression was now that of an elderly gentleman who consents to join in a silly parlour game for the sake of the children, but looks forward eagerly to their bedtime.

"I can stand a joke as well as the next man," he said. "I admit that you have hoaxed me finely. But now that you've had your joke, shall we be getting back again?"

Thursoe ignored the suggestion.

"I consider that I showed very sound business instincts in my choice of a sphere of operations," he continued. "I needed mountains in which to hide and a frontier to cross in case of pursuit. The Balkans would have suited me admirably except for the lack of people to rob. Here I have mountains and a frontier, and within very easy reach Monte Carlo, a place where the world's richest mugs congregate. Having chosen my locality, I learned to speak the local dialect, recruited a robber band, chose a cave, and"—he waved his hands expressively—"here we all are."

Marco, Henri, and Piero, considering that the gesture was meant to include them in a conversation of which they understood not a word, nodded and smiled.

"So far I have been very successful. I have the good sense to make my terms very reasonable, and as yet all my victims have preferred to pay up without fuss rather than let their friends know that they were such fools as to allow themselves to be kidnapped by—a mere lounge lizard."

Now at last Mr. Best was convinced he was in the hands of a brigand.

"I'll see you hanged before I pay you a penny," he snarled.

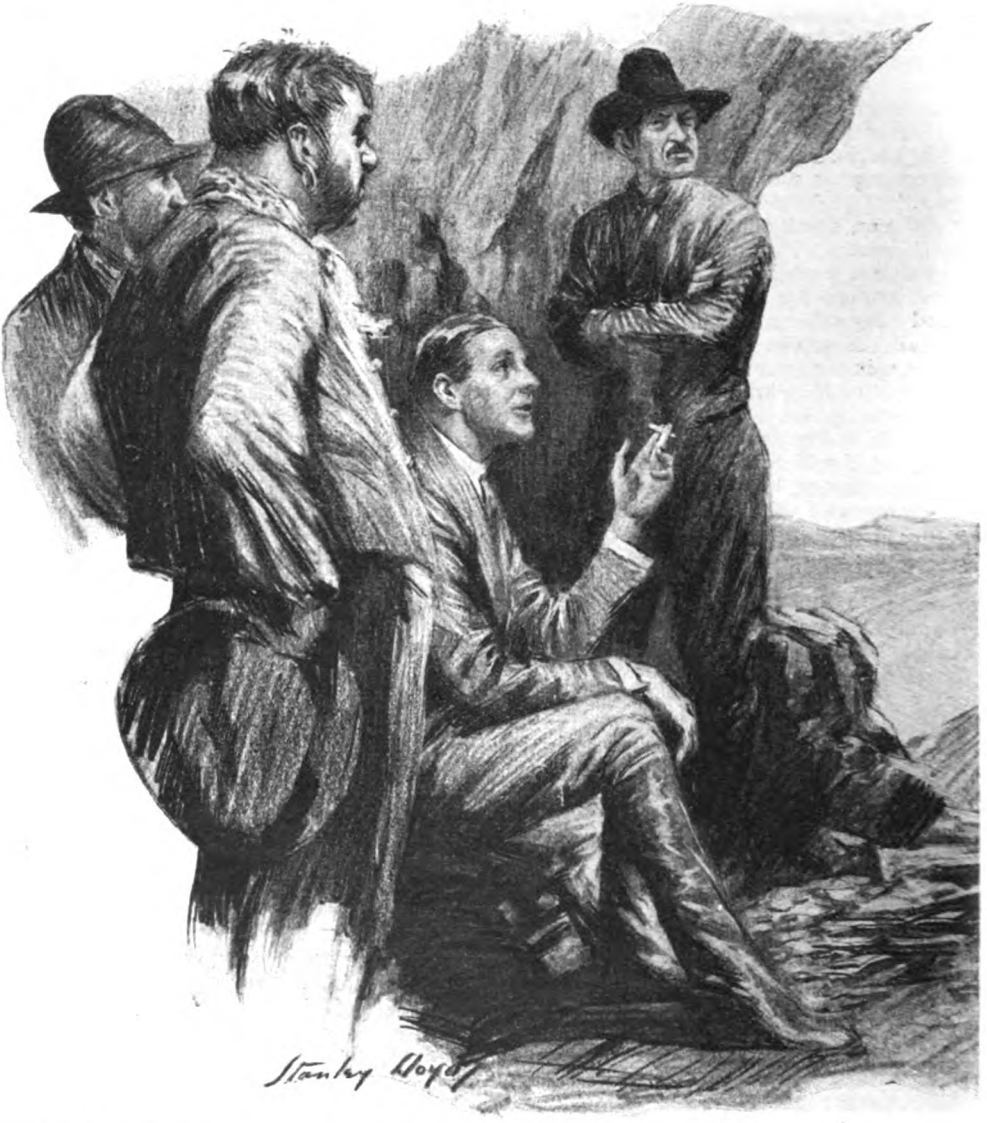
"Guillotined it would be," said Thursoe, imperturbably, "if I were caught on the French side of the frontier. In Italy there is no capital punishment."

MR. BEST went to the edge of the cave, looked down the last bit of precipice he had climbed, and shuddered. He had not climbed it without help, and he knew the descent would be still more difficult. Thursoe approached him from behind as he looked down it, placed his hands on his shoulders and the point of his boot behind his knee, then by a skilful jiu-jitsu trick forced him gently but firmly back into a sitting position.

"Don't compel me to use force," he said, "it's so vulgar."

"By this time to-morrow," said Mr. Best, "the people at the hotel will have informed the police that I am missing and a search will be made."

"If a search is made it will be in France. You must remember that we are now in Italy. The good-natured official who let you cross the frontier without a passport will probably hold his tongue for fear of a reprimand. If he does not, the French Government will ask the Italian Government to find you. The Italian Government,



having long since scrapped the machinery it once had for the suppression of brigandage, will not know how to set about it. The French Government won't worry much about you unless the British Government puts pressure on it, and the British Government has had too much of a sickener of war to make a *casus belli* about a mere archæologist. Probably after months of correspondence they will turn over your case to the League of Nations—and what the League of Nations will be able to do for you I haven't an idea. I really think that you had better pay up—if only to save trouble to others. Have you six thousand francs on you ? "

" No," snapped Mr. Best.

" That's a pity. To keep you here while I get your cheque cashed will involve delay, and every day's delay will cost you three thousand francs. Besides, I cannot make you as comfortable in this cave as I should like. If it is necessary for you to communicate with your friends it would be as well, perhaps, to follow the former custom of sending one of your ears in order to convince them that steps have been taken to make you regard the matter as urgent. On this point, Piero—who does not value his beauty—wishes me to say that he will let you have one of his own ears for ten thousand francs. That would save you from mutilation and would provide Piero with a little capital

At last Mr. Best was convinced he was in the hands of a brigand. "I'll see you hanged before I pay you a penny," he snarled.

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with which to start a new and better life in South America."

"I shall do nothing of the kind. You will not find me as amenable as the others you have gulled. If I flatly refuse to pay you anything, you will have to release me sooner or later, and the longer you keep me the hotter I will make it for you."

"I am prepared to keep you indefinitely; the cost of your food will be almost negligible. But should the care of you eventually become irksome, there are a hundred places within a mile of here where a corpse could be successfully hidden. What would happen would be that a year and a day from the date of your disappearance your sorrowing relatives—I cannot believe that they would sorrow very grievously—would go to the Court and ask leave to presume your death."

Mr. Best retired to the far end of the cave, sat down, crossed his arms, and tried to look inflexibly determined. Thursoe shared a meal of gritty bread and flinty cheese—Mr. Best refused his portion of it—with Marco, Henri, and Piero. When they had eaten, the three Mentonesi bowed and left the cave.

"They will come back at night to keep guard," said Thursoe, "so that I can sleep in comparative comfort."

Mr. Best ignored the remark. Thursoe sat with his feet dangling over the edge of the cave, idly tossing stones down the mountainside. An hour passed. Mr. Best, torn between pride and hunger, was wondering whether he could reach the food bag without being noticed, when he was startled by an exclamation from his captor.

"Great Scott! I'd nearly forgotten that I promised to be back in England for the Derby."

For a moment Mr. Best wondered whether Thursoe's interest in horse-racing would curtail his imprisonment. Then the latter peeled off his coat, seized the tool they had brought, and began to dig.

"I've a good mind to make you do this," he said, fiercely. "Since your relatives will be spared the cost of your funeral, you ought at least to dig your own grave."

Mr. Best's face turned a dirty grey. He took a T. Cook and Son's cheque-book from

his pocket. At once Thursoe produced a fountain pen.

"That s the sensible thing to do," he said. "Make it payable to 'self or bearer,' please. You mustn't mind if I detain you here till the cheque is cashed, but I'll send Piero back to keep you company. It has been such a pleasure to meet you."

MR. BEST watched him out of sight; then, resolutely shutting fear out of his mind, slid and slithered unaided down the precipitous declivity at the cave's mouth. Inspired far less by consideration of his own pocket than by the hope to score off Thursoe, he meant to make a desperate effort, impossible though it would probably prove, to reach Monte Carlo in time to prevent payment of the cheque.

He had accomplished a mile of his journey, at the cost of some painful bruises and the utter ruin of his clothes, when he saw Piero coming towards him. What the bandit muleteer would do to him he had no idea. Perhaps, using his knife as a goad, he would prod him back to his cave prison. Perhaps, reckless of the sanctity of human life and unaware that the ransom had been paid, he might use the knife even more drastically.

Mr. Best had little time in which to devise a plan, but his mind worked swiftly. Thieves are always mercenary. Treachery is the standing menace to all outlaw societies. In the hope that Piero would prove amenable to a bribe he ransacked his pockets, and as the man approached held out to him a banknote for a hundred francs, several notes of small denominations, a gold pencil-case, and a silver wrist-watch.

Piero looked at the money as if he did not catch Mr. Best's meaning, but when Mr. Best put the question beyond doubt by stuffing it into his hands, bewilderment gave place to surprise on the muleteer's swarthy face and surprise to delighted gratitude. He swept off his hat with a gesture worthy of a Court Chamberlain, took Mr. Best's right hand in both of his, and pressed it to his lips.

"Monte Carlo," said Mr. Best. "*Vitement! Vite!*"

Piero understood. He led the way. When they came within sight of the inn he ran on ahead. Before Mr. Best could reach the place he ran out of the stable leading a mule.

"*Vite!*" said Mr. Best again, as he climbed into the saddle. "Monte Carlo. *Vite!*"

But the mule was not to be cajoled or whacked into exceeding her regulation pace, and lamps were already alight when Mr. Best, weak with hunger, rage, fatigue, and bruises, dismounted at the gate of the Hotel Splendide.

Under fairy lamps hung in the lemon trees in the garden a fashionably-dressed throng waiting the dinner hour sat sipping vermouth. Seated at one of the tables—Mr. Best could scarcely believe his eyes—was the bandit lounge lizard, and the man with whom he was chatting—Mr. Best recognized him from portraits in illustrated papers—was none other than the British Ambassador.

Diffidence was never one of Mr. Best's failings. He strode up to the Ambassador and loudly demanded whether he knew to whom he was talking.

"I have known the Earl of Thursoe for a long while," replied the Ambassador, politely.

"Earl of Fiddlesticks!" Mr. Best shouted, so loudly that all eyes were turned towards him and people at the farther tables stood up to get a better view of him. "He's a robber, a bandit, a——"

"I assure you you are mistaken," said the Ambassador, smiling. "He is my private secretary."

Lord Thursoe took a sealed envelope from his pocket.

"I was on the point of leaving this at the hotel office to await your return," he said. "Perhaps matters would be easier to understand if you read it."

Mr. Best gasped, spluttered, opened the envelope, and read:—

Hotel Splendide, Monte Carlo.

Dear Mr. Best,—

I return your cheque herewith. I won't renew the apology you refused to accept. May I suggest that in future you should try not to be an ass?

Yours, etc.,

THURSOE.

A MASTER LESSON on the "LIEBESTRAUM" of LISZT

By

MARK HAMBOURG

LOVE DREAMS

No. 3

Poem by Freiligrath.

Oh! love while love is left to thee;
Oh! love while love is yet thine own;
The hour will come when bitterly
Thou'lt mourn by silent graves, alone!

And let thy breast with kindness glow,
And gentle thoughts within thee move,
While yet a heart, through weal and woe,
Beats to thine own in faithful love.

And who to thee his heart doth bare,
Take heed thou fondly cherish him:
And gladden thou his every hour,
And not an hour with sorrow dim!

And guard thy lips and keep them still;
Too soon escapes an angry word:
"Oh God! I did not mean it ill!"
But yet he sorrowed as he heard.

SOME of Liszt's most delightful music was inspired by the literature of his day. The French Romantic School with which he became associated during his stay in Paris influenced many of the compositions in his "Années de Pèlerinage"; but this "Liebestraum" was inspired by a poem by Freiligrath, and it is a good example of the "Salon" music of which Liszt was such a master. It is published in a series of three Nocturnes entitled "Dreams of Love," and is one of the most popular of the composer's works. He has embellished his theme with consummate art, and no one who has heard the "Liebestraum" can fail to appreciate its charm. Graceful and entrancing melody is combined in it with a certain dignity and depth of feeling, and ornamented with delicate and brilliant arabesques. Above the opening measures is printed a sonnet by F. Freiligrath. It exhorts the lover to love always with the utmost of his being, while he may, and never to let a harsh word escape him, as death so soon brings separation and regrets.

In this atmosphere of intense feeling tinged with melancholy the melody of the Nocturne should open.

THE MELODY SINGS.

THE song must be brought out in declamatory style, as if sung by a singer with all the correct relief and elasticity of rhythm for taking in breath at the right moments. The arpeggio-like accompaniment in the right hand should be played throughout with a juicy (that is, a full round) tone, not only as a mere figure but as a sensuous adjunct to the

melody. In measure five the notes F, G, A-flat, C, B-flat in the left hand, and A-flat in the succeeding measure, must be especially emphasized and played *rubato* to give stress of feeling to the end of the phrase.

In measure eight, on the *fourth beat* in the *bass* there is a *G-flat* which should be brought out. In measure ten on the high F in the left hand, a pause can be made amounting almost to a *fermata*.

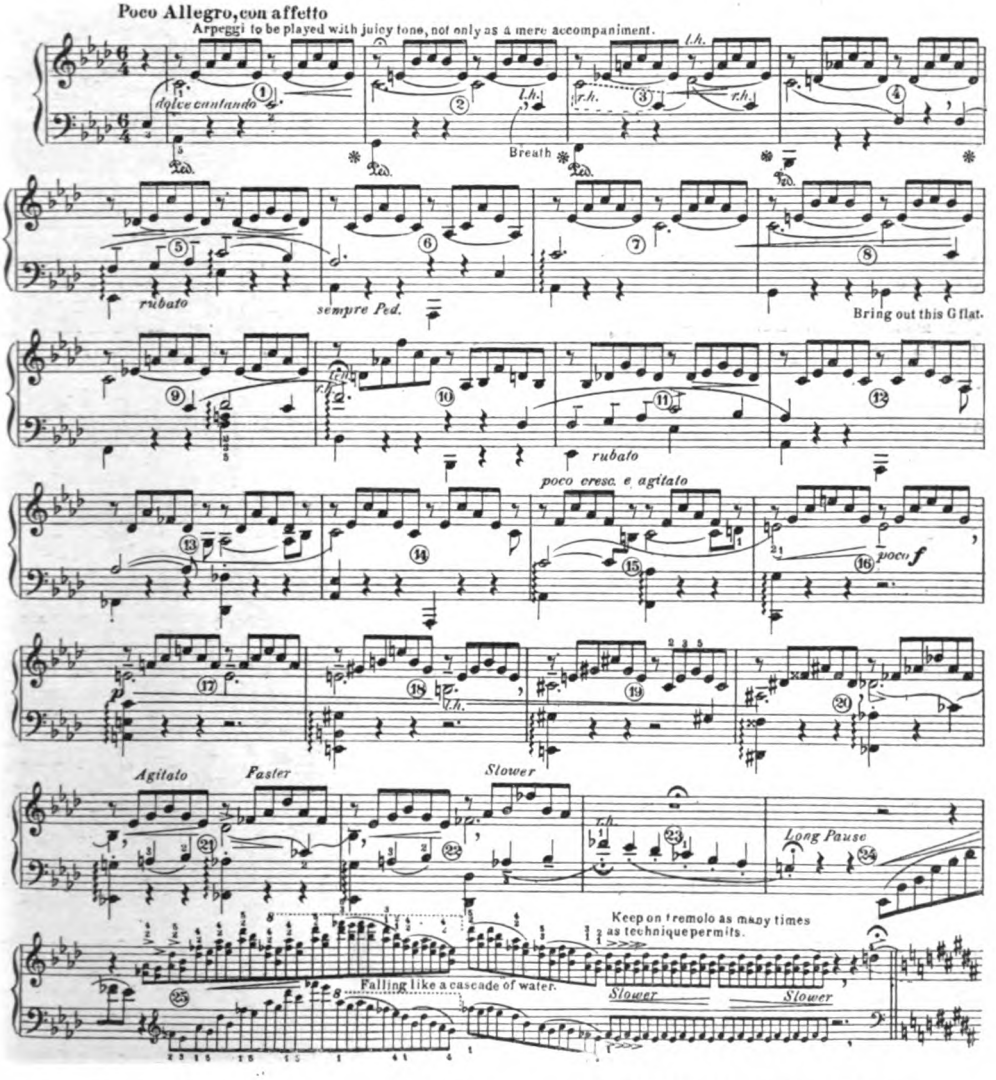
In measure eleven, as before in measure five, the phrase F, G, A-flat, C, B-flat, A-flat should be declaimed in *rubato* fashion, with a rise in tone on the culminating C, and then a drop back to the A-flat in the twelfth measure. In the sixteenth measure there should be a *crescendo* beginning on the first E-natural on the first beat, and proceeding to the second E-natural in the middle part, but dropping immediately to *piano* again on the first beat of the seventeenth measure. At the twenty-first measure a spirit of agitation should be introduced, the *tempo* being slightly quickened, and a *crescendo* rising from the emphasized B-flat of the melody on the first beat of the measure to the D-flat half-note on the third beat. From this third beat to the C-flat on the fifth beat of this same measure the tone should decrease, and then rise again in measure twenty-two to the F-flat on the third beat, slowing down with emphasis on the notes A-flat and B-flat on the fifth and sixth beats in the bass of the measure. The culmination of the agitation is reached on the F-flat *fermata* in the twenty-third measure, and then descends in a declamatory phrase to G-natural on the first beat of the twenty-fourth measure, which should also be held like a *fermata*. A long pause must be made before attacking the ensuing cadenza. This should start *piano* and not very fast, and then *crescendo* and *accelerando* with four well-marked accents on the first, second, third, and fourth double notes of the figure in the right hand on the third beat of the twenty-fifth measure. The rest of the figure should be made to sound like a rippling cascade of water falling down in a silver shower and getting slower and slower at the end as the rush dies away. Four accents should be given on the first four notes of the double tremolo which terminates the cadenza, and the tremolo should be kept on and repeated as many times as the technic of the performer permits.

TAKING BREATH.

A LONG pause must then be made, as if to take breath, and then the main theme appears in the right hand (this time in B major). The music is here marked *Piu animato, con passione*; but I do not play it so, but start the song at this point quite quietly and dreamily. In the twenty-ninth measure the tone should sink somewhat from the accented D-sharp on the first beat of the measure to the G-sharp on the third beat. The first, second, and third quarter-notes in the treble in the thirtieth measure should be emphasized and the whole phrase declaimed, whilst the second figure in the bass in the thirty-first measure must be brought out with a welling *crescendo* and *decrescendo*. I play the thirty-second measure a little slower and the thirty-third one a little faster, and the thirty-fifth again slower, to create variation of expression; and I bring out the accompaniment very much in both hands. In the thirty-sixth measure the declamatory passage in octaves should be played very *rubato*, leading up to a big pause and *fermata* on the fourth beat of the same measure.

The thirty-seventh measure should be resumed *a tempo* in the key of C major. The passage in the accompaniment in this measure is made easier by taking the first four notes of it with the right hand with fingers five, two, three, one, and then continuing the rest of the passage with the left hand. An accent may be given to the chord on the first beat of the thirty-ninth measure, and the melody should begin to rise in an atmosphere of gathering emotion up to the *fortissimo* in the forty-first measure, where everything should sound *marcato* and *dramatic* and should continue in suppressed excitement. In the forty-fourth measure I give an emphasis on the note G-sharp on the fourth beat, at the beginning of the descending figure in the left hand, and also emphasis on the chords on the first, second, and third beats in the right hand in the forty-fifth measure.

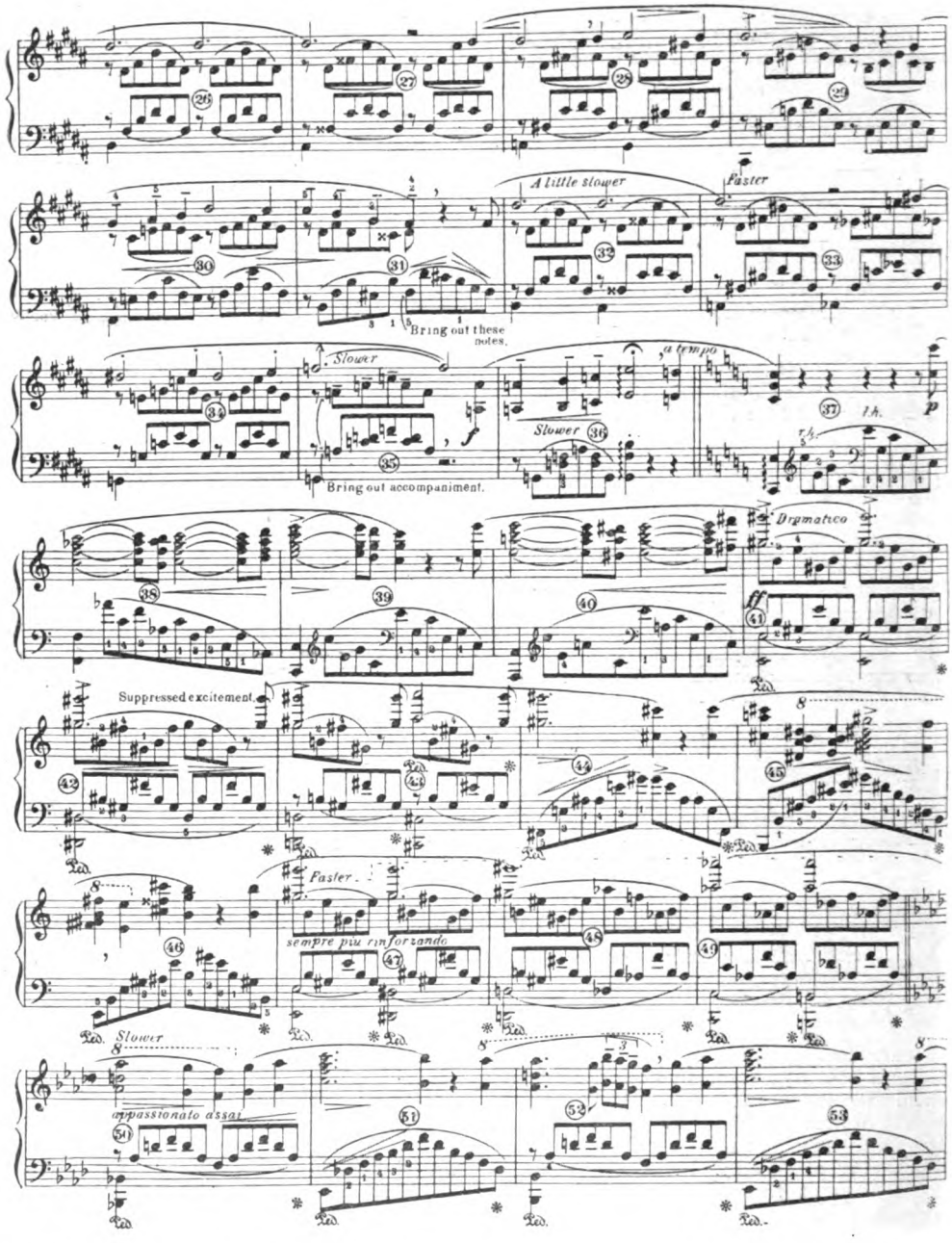
From the forty-seventh measure onwards to the fiftieth the *tempo* should be quickened, and then broadened out again in the fiftieth measure. A *decrescendo* to the middle of that measure, rising once more in *crescendo* to the chord on the first beat of the fifty-first measure, is very effective. In the fifty-second measure there are octaves in triplets in the right hand, each note of which must be emphasized; and again in the fifty-fourth measure the triplet passages in the treble must be declaimed and lead up to a big pause on the octave G. Proceeding after the pause, the next passage in the fifty-fifth measure must be played very *rubato*, with a *decrescendo* to the middle of the measure, and then a *crescendo* with prominence given to the octaves G and A-flat. These octaves lead on to an *accelerando* of *tempo* in the next two measures, and to a big attack of the chord on the first beat of measure fifty-eight, where the final



cadenza breaks away. The top note of the cadenza on E-natural in the right hand should receive an accent ; and then the tone should diminish as the big passage descends the first time. It should rise again with quickening of speed and accents on each of the E-flats at the beginning of the three ascending *arpeggi*, culminating in a *fortissimo* on C, D-flat, A-natural, B-flat, F-sharp, and G, which are the first six notes of the final descending passage, and should be played slightly slower with accents. From these six notes onwards the cadenza should descend faster and faster, like a ball bouncing downhill from one stone to another, until it slows up with a slight *crescendo* and then a *decrescendo* in the last eighteen notes of the passage.

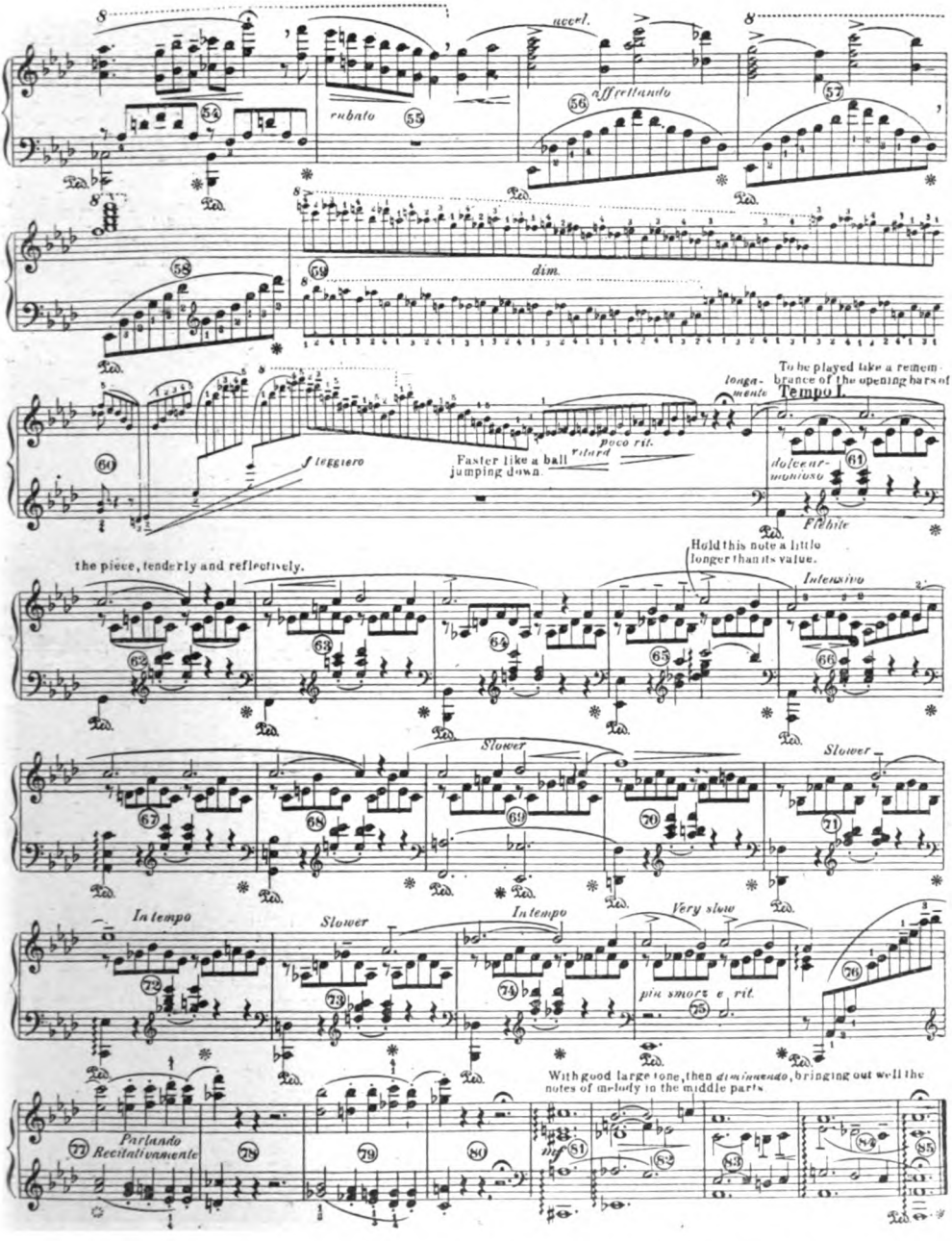
RETURN OF FIRST THEME.

AFTER a pause, the original melody is now resumed and should start with a lingering attack from the up beat on E-flat to the C on the first beat of the sixty-first measure, holding the C on just a trifle longer than its real value. This part of the "Liebestraum" must be played reflectively and tenderly, endeavouring to give an effect as of a remembrance of the opening measures of the piece. The tone produced ought to be what I call *flebile*, meaning by that an intangible, far-away sound. The notes on the first, second, third, and fourth beats of the sixty-fifth measure should be brought out with feeling, and the accompaniment in the sixty-sixth measure should have an atmosphere of



intensity with a rising and falling of tone.

The *tempo* should be somewhat broadened in the sixty-ninth measure, with a lingering attack again from the C on the last beat in the treble of that measure to the long F in the next measure. From here on I introduce some fluctuation of *tempo*. Measure seventy-one I play somewhat slower; measure seventy-two is in *tempo* again; measure seventy-three is lingering; measure seventy-four in *tempo*; and then from the seventy-fifth measure onwards there should be a gradual and continuous slackening of speed, the fingers trailing on the notes as if loath to leave them. The whole of the seventy-sixth measure must be very much retarded, and each of the last four notes



in it emphasized, whilst the seventy-seventh measure should be performed as if the notes were almost being spoken *recitativo*, rather than played, and trying to give an effect as of a question asked. A long pause in measure eighty brings us to the final chords of the piece, which are marked in the music *mp*. But I start these chords in *mezzo-forte* with a good large tone, and then make a gradual *decrescendo*, pressing out the notes of the melody in the middle parts in the eighty-third and eighty-fourth measures —namely, C, B-flat; C, E-flat; D-flat, C; with a final fervour of expiring emotion.

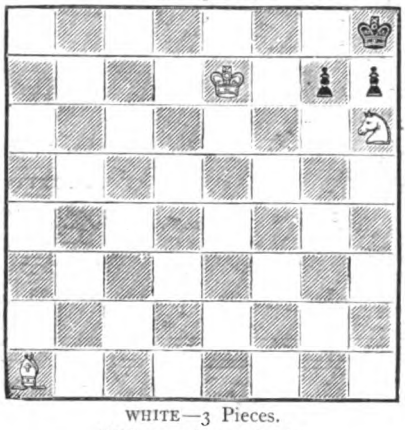
PERPLEXITIES.

— By —
HENRY E. DUDENEY

838.—A CURIOUS END-GAME.

HERE is a curious position that is said to have occurred in actual play. White played Kt to B 5 and captured the Kt P, afterwards securing the

BLACK—3 Pieces.



WHITE—3 Pieces.

White to play and win.

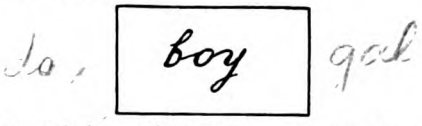
other Pawn and mating with his two pieces—a cumbrous way of winning, considering that he might have checkmated his opponent in a very few moves. It is, in fact, a very easy win if you happen to hit on the idea.

839.—WORD REVERSALS AND REFLECTIONS.

OVER thirty years ago in a competition I offered a prize for the best long sentence in capital letters that read exactly the same when reflected in water, and the prize was awarded for :—

I DECIDED HE DID HIDE ODD DICE BOX.

If you imagine this painted on a hoarding on the bank of a canal the reflection in the water will read exactly the same. A reminder of this has just led me to consider the different case of words printed in capitals that may also be read upside down—that is, by turning the page. An obvious case, where the word is the same both ways, is O X O , and an interesting example, where the word is changed, is M O N S, which read upside down is S N O W. But there are extremely few such words. Let us try our hands at words in ordinary handwriting, without the use of any capital letter. I show here that a boy, by being turned upside down, may become a hog, which Heaven forfend!



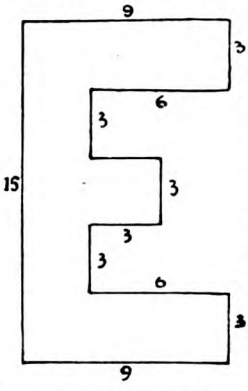
Can you find a good word that, written in this way, *repeats* itself when read upside down? Just as O X O does with capital letters. It will be remembered that we are here dealing not with printed letters but with handwriting.

840.—BLINDNESS IN BATS.

A NATURALIST, who I fear has a tendency to draw on the imagination, told me that he had investigated the question of blindness in bats. "I find," he said, "that their long habit of sleeping in dark corners during the day and only going abroad at night has really led to a great prevalence of blindness among them, though some had perfect sight and others could see out of one eye. The actual statistics that I have obtained are as follows: Two of my bats could see out of the right eye, just three of them could see out of the left eye, four could not see out of the left eye, and five could not see out of the right eye." Here is a puzzle. Can you state the smallest number of bats this man must have examined in order to arrive at these results?

841.—DISSECTING THE LETTER E.

IN our issue for December, 1925, I asked my readers to cut this E into five pieces that would fit together and form a perfect square. It was understood that no piece was to be turned over, but in reproducing this in my last book ("Modern Puzzles," C. Arthur Pearson, Ltd., 3s. 6d.) I remark that it can be done in four pieces if you are allowed to turn pieces over. As many correspondents have asked me to show them how this may be done I give the puzzle again, with permission to make the reversals. Can you do it in four pieces? I have given all the measurements in inches so that there should be no doubt as to the correct proportions of the letter.



Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

833.—EASY DRAUGHTS.

PLAY as follows: 23 19. 16–23, 12 8, 11–4, 24 19. 2–11, 19 10, and White wins. For the benefit of readers who are not familiar with the draughts notation, I will repeat that the white squares are numbered 1 to 32 from left to right downwards, the top row being 1 2 3 4 and the second 5 6 7 8, and so on.

834.—OUT AND HOME.

THE distance must be 13⅛ miles, so that he walked into the town in 2⅝ hours and returned in 4⅜ hours, making seven hours—as stated.

835.—AN OLD ENIGMA.

THE answer is C L I O. First write down C I (a hundred and one). Insert the L (by fifty divide) and we get C L I, to which the O is applied, giving us C L I O (one taken from the nine Muses).

836.—ALPHABET WORDS.

THE word is X P D N C (expediency).

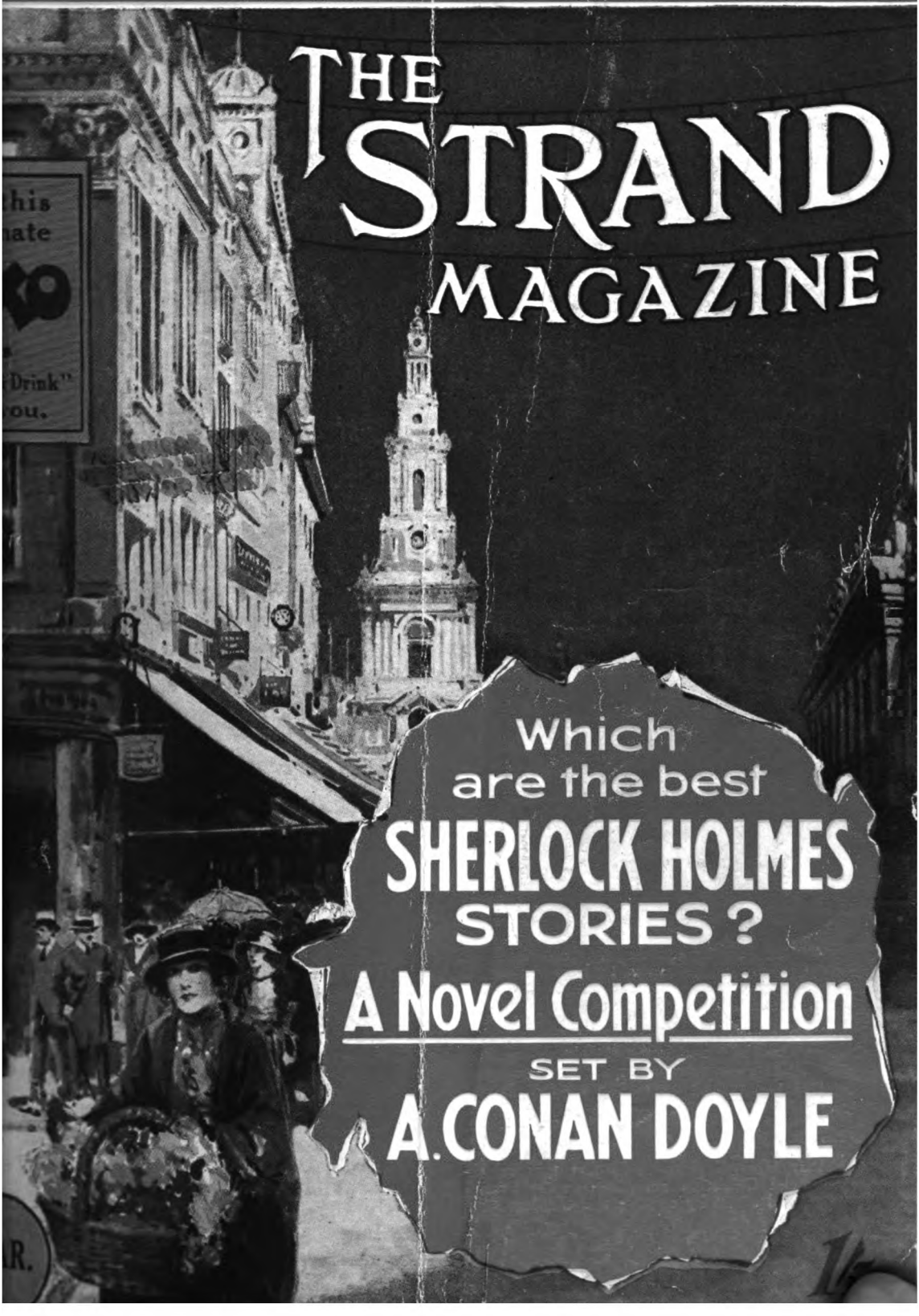
837.—A TINY MAGIC SQUARE.

THE little trick in this puzzle consists in writing the first 1 2 3 in the middle row. You can then place the 3 1 2 and the 2 3 1 in the remaining vacant rows. If you start by putting the 1 2 3 at the top it cannot be done.

NEW STORY By P. G. WODEHOUSE

MAR 9 1924

THE STRAND MAGAZINE



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THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for March, 1927.

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Frontispiece: On the floor stood eleven empty bottles, and in front of the eleven was the teapot. "That gentleman," he said gravely, indicating the latter, "is the commanding officer. Don't you think he's rather a good-looker?"

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To face back of Frontispiece.

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MARCH, 1927.

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38.—WISTERIA LODGE (THE SINGULAR EXPERIENCE OF MR. JOHN SCOTT ECCLES AND THE TIGER OF SAN PEDRO).

39.—THE BRUCE-PARTINGTON PLANS.

40.—THE DEVIL'S FOOT.

41.—THE RED CIRCLE.

42.—THE DISAPPEARANCE OF LADY FRANCES CARFAX.

A SHERLOCK HOLMES COMPETITION.

(*For particulars see p. 281.*)

43.—THE DYING DETECTIVE.

44.—HIS LAST BOW.

ON THE FLOOR STOOD ELEVEN EMPTY BOTTLES, AND IN FRONT OF THE ELEVEN WAS THE TEAPOT.

"THAT GENTLEMAN," HE SAID, GRAVELY INDICATING THE LATTER, "IS THE COMMANDING OFFICER. DON'T YOU THINK HE'S RATHER A GOOD-LOOKER?"

(See page 220.)

A HOPELESS CASE

By

"SAPPER" (H. C. McNEILE)

Illustrated by
W. R. S. STOTT

I.

THROUGH the open window came the ceaseless noise of the tree beetles. Occasionally it would be drowned by the coughing grunt of a lion in the distance, or the shrill scream of some animal near by—a scream that showed that death was, as ever, abroad in the land outside. But these were only interludes: life to the man who sat at the table seemed to consist of that eternal, damnable noise.

He was not a very pleasant sight—the sole occupant of the room. His chin required the attentions of a razor; his shirt, which was opened at the neck, would have done with a wash. His riding breeches were threadbare; his boots caked in mud. And yet for anyone with eyes to see one fact would have struck home. Those breeches and boots bore the unmistakable stamp of the West-end.

The room was in confusion. Dust lay thick in the corners; a few odd letters littered the table. The lamp had smoked, and half the funnel was black with soot. Against one wall a cupboard minus its doors leaned drunkenly—a cupboard in which unwashed plates and an old teapot without a handle were jumbled together. And, ranged in rows along the opposite wall, empty bottles.

A full one stood on the table by his side, and after a while he picked it up and half filled his glass with whisky. Then he resumed his study of the book that lay in front of him. A strange book to find in such surroundings, and yet one which helped to explain the riddle of the riding breeches. It was a book of snapshots and odd cuttings from newspapers. A few groups cut from *The Tatler* and *The Sketch* were pasted in, and it was at one of these that he was staring.

Bridesmaids; bride and bridegroom; best man—particularly the best man. He was in the uniform of the 10th Lancers, and for a long while the man sat there motionless, studying the face on the paper. Good-looking, with clear-cut features; a magnificent specimen of manhood, showing off the gorgeous uniform of the regiment to perfection. Then very deliberately he got up and crossed the room to the broken bit of mirror that served as a shaving glass. Dispassionately he studied his own face, not sparing himself in the examination. And at length he turned away.

"Great God!" he said, very slowly. "How did it happen?"

And the line of bottles gave answer.

He went back to the table, and started turning over the pages of the book. The regiment on parade; a stately home set in wonderful trees; groups on the moors with keepers and dogs; groups with the women he had known. . . . And at last a simple snapshot of two people—himself and a girl. Pat and self—thus ran the inscription underneath it, and for perhaps a quarter of an hour he sat there motionless, staring at it. Some big insect fussed angrily against the mosquito netting, trying to get at the light; ceaselessly the beetles droned on—

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but the man at the table heard nothing. He was back in the might-have-been ; back at Henley—three years before the war.

Pat ! What was she doing now ? She'd stuck to him loyally ; stuck to him as only a woman can stick to the thing she loves. For it had started even then. The curse was on him : the soul-rotting, hellish curse that had brought him to this. But at last it had had to end : the thing had become impossible.

He had fought. God ! how he'd fought ! But it had beaten him. No excuse, of course : to be beaten is no excuse for a man. And he could still hear Pat's voice that last time—could still see her sweet face with the tears pouring down it.

" Jim—if you can beat it—come back to me."

And that was after he had had to send in his papers.

He hadn't beaten it ; it had beaten him. And now Pat was married ; two children—or was it three ? And he—what was he ? His family said he was farming in Africa. A pleasant fiction which deceived no one. Least of all himself. He was not farming in Africa ; he was a drunken remittance man living on a farm in Africa.

He closed the book, and stared with haggard eyes into the darkness. Why had this girl come to stop at Merrick's farm, and opened all these old wounds ? Why had he seen her that afternoon ?

She'd reminded him of Pat a little. Cool and dressed in white—riding Merrick's chestnut cob in a way that showed she was used to horses. What the devil did she want to bring all that back to him for ? Girls and horses were all part of the life he'd lived a hundred years ago.

" Yes, a trooper of the forces, who has owned his own six horses. . . ."

And he wasn't even that. Just a drunken down-and-outer, with a father in the House of Lords who paid him five hundred a year on condition that he never set foot in England again.

Cool and dressed in white ! Lord ! but it was something to see a girl of his own class again. She'd stared at him in faint surprise when he'd spoken ; drink doesn't kill a man's accent. And by now she'd know all about him : the Merricks would see to that.

They didn't know who he was ; he'd given his name out here as Brown. But they did know *what* he was, and that was all that mattered.

" A drunkard, my dear ; a hopeless case."

He could hear Mrs. Merrick saying it. Not that she was a bad sort ; quite the reverse, in fact. But she was the wife of a settler who had made good, and she loathed weakness. At first she had tried to pull him round—to make him take an interest in his property. For months she had persevered, and it wasn't until she found out that he wouldn't help himself that she gave up trying. Contemptuously.

And he deserved it : he was under no delusions. But now—— He stood up suddenly, and instinctively his shoulders squared. Supposing he took a pull at himself ; it wasn't too late. Supposing he, too, made good. Supposing that girl dressed in white——

And suddenly he laughed a little bitterly. Girls dressed in white were outside his scheme of things altogether. Quite deliberately he reached out for the bottle, and tipped what was left into his glass. Then he performed his nightly rite. With meticulous attention to dressing he placed it in line with the others ; called the squadron to attention, and then dismissed them.

And ten minutes later the man who called himself Jim Brown, having kicked off his boots, lay sleeping heavily on his bed.

II.

HE'D shaved when he next saw the girl, and his shirt was clean. She was riding, as before, and he stood waiting for her to come up.

" Good morning," she said, cheerily. " What a heavenly day ! "

" The one compensation of this God-forsaken country," he remarked, " is that the days generally are heavenly."

She looked at him steadily.

" Why do you stay if you don't like it ? "

" Entirely my duty towards my neighbour," he answered. " Think of all the grief and sorrow I should cause if I departed."

" Is that your bungalow up there ? " she said suddenly.

" It is," he remarked. " And dilapidated though it looks from the outside, I can assure you the interior is much worse."

" That's good," she cried. " And as I can hardly believe it possible, I'm coming up to see."

For a moment he hesitated.

" It really isn't in a fit condition——" he began.

" Bunkum," she answered. " Do you suppose I've never seen an untidy room before ? "

" It isn't altogether that," he said, slowly.

Then he gave a short laugh.

" Right-ho ! " he cried. " Your sins be upon your own head."

He led the way in silence, and having tethered her horse flung open the door.

" Behold the ancestral hall," he announced gravely.

Dispassionately he studied his own face in the mirror. And at length he turned away. "Great God!" he said. **"How did it happen?"**

Her eyes travelled round the room, resting for a moment on the array of bottles, while he watched her with a faint smile. What was she going to say?

"Get out," she remarked. "This is going to be no place for a man for the next hour or two."

It was so completely unexpected that for a moment or two he could only stare at her.

"Go on—get out," she repeated, peeling off her gloves. "You'll only be in the way."

"You topper," he said under his breath. "You absolute topper."

Then he swung on his heel and left her, not knowing if she'd heard what he'd said—and not caring.

Two hours later he returned to find her sitting on the table smoking a cigarette. And the first thing he noticed was that the empty bottles had disappeared.

"I see you've removed my squadron," he said. "It was very nearly full strength except for the officers."

"You mean those dirty old bottles," she remarked. "I've buried them outside."

"Didn't you admire their perfect dressing on parade?" he asked. "I used to call them to attention every time a new recruit joined."

She stared at him through the smoke of her cigarette.

"I've been looking at this scrap-book of yours," she said, calmly. "I hope you don't mind."

"Not at all. I fear my library is somewhat deficient. But I need hardly perhaps say that Brown still remains a very good name."

He glanced round the room: everything

was spotless. The shelves of the cupboard were adorned with paper; the plates were washed and neatly stacked; even the teapot seemed to have taken on a new dignity.

"You seem to have been most thorough," he said gravely. "Thank you."

"So you won the Grand Military, did you?" she remarked.

"I believe that in some former existence of mine I had that honour. Incidentally speaking," he continued, "I trust that you haven't buried the quick and the dead together."

"There are a dozen full bottles in there," she said, pointing to his bedroom. "I thought they would be more convenient for you if you woke in the night."

He stood motionless, staring at her. Her face was expressionless: her eyes met his calmly and frankly.

"I deserve that," he said in a low voice.

"My dear man," she remarked, "I don't think you *deserve* anything at all. It's the wrong word. It's not for me to judge. All I say is that I think it's a pity that being who you are you should be what you are. It seems such a ghastly waste."

"Some such idea occurred to me when I took the name of Brown," he answered, thoughtfully.

She shook herself a little impatiently.

"How you can have that book here—be reminded day in, day out, of everything that might be yours—and not go mad, absolutely beats me."

"Sometimes it beats me, too," he said, quietly.

"Good God! man," she cried, "can't you try?"

"Good God! girl," he answered, "do you suppose I haven't?"

And for a space they were silent, staring at one another. At last she slipped from the table and went up to him.

"Sorry," she said, gently. "I shouldn't have said that: Look here—can I help? Julia Merrick told me she had done her best—but Julia is married and busy. I'm neither. Shall we have a dip at it together? No slop and slush about it. If you want a drink, have one. I sha'n't look at you reprovingly. But if we pull together we might be able to keep whisky as a drink—not as a permanent diet."

He turned suddenly and walked over to the open window. And she being a girl of much understanding lit another cigarette and waited. In her eyes was a look of wonderful pity, but she didn't want him to see it. Something told her that she had started on the right note; that any trace of sentimentality would be fatal. For perhaps five minutes he stood there with his back to her, and only the pawing of the pony on the ground outside broke the silence. Then he swung round.

"Damned sporting offer," he said, curtly. "Afraid you'll find it a bit boring, though."

"I'll chance it," she said, "Come over and dine to-night."

III.

AND so the man who called himself Brown began to fight again. For hours he would sit in his bungalow sweating with the agony of it, and with every nerve in his body screaming for the stuff. And sometimes the girl would sit opposite him, holding his two hands across the table and watching him with cool, steady eyes.

His face was haggard; his hands shook uncontrollably when she released them. But he fought on with every gun and rifle he possessed, and the girl fought at his side.

It happened unexpectedly as such things will—in his bungalow one evening. For three hours the girl had been with him, and that particular crisis had passed. They were sitting side by side on the stoep, watching the sun go down behind the distant Drakensburg, and without thought she put her hand on his knee.

"Jim," she whispered. "How utterly marvellous!"

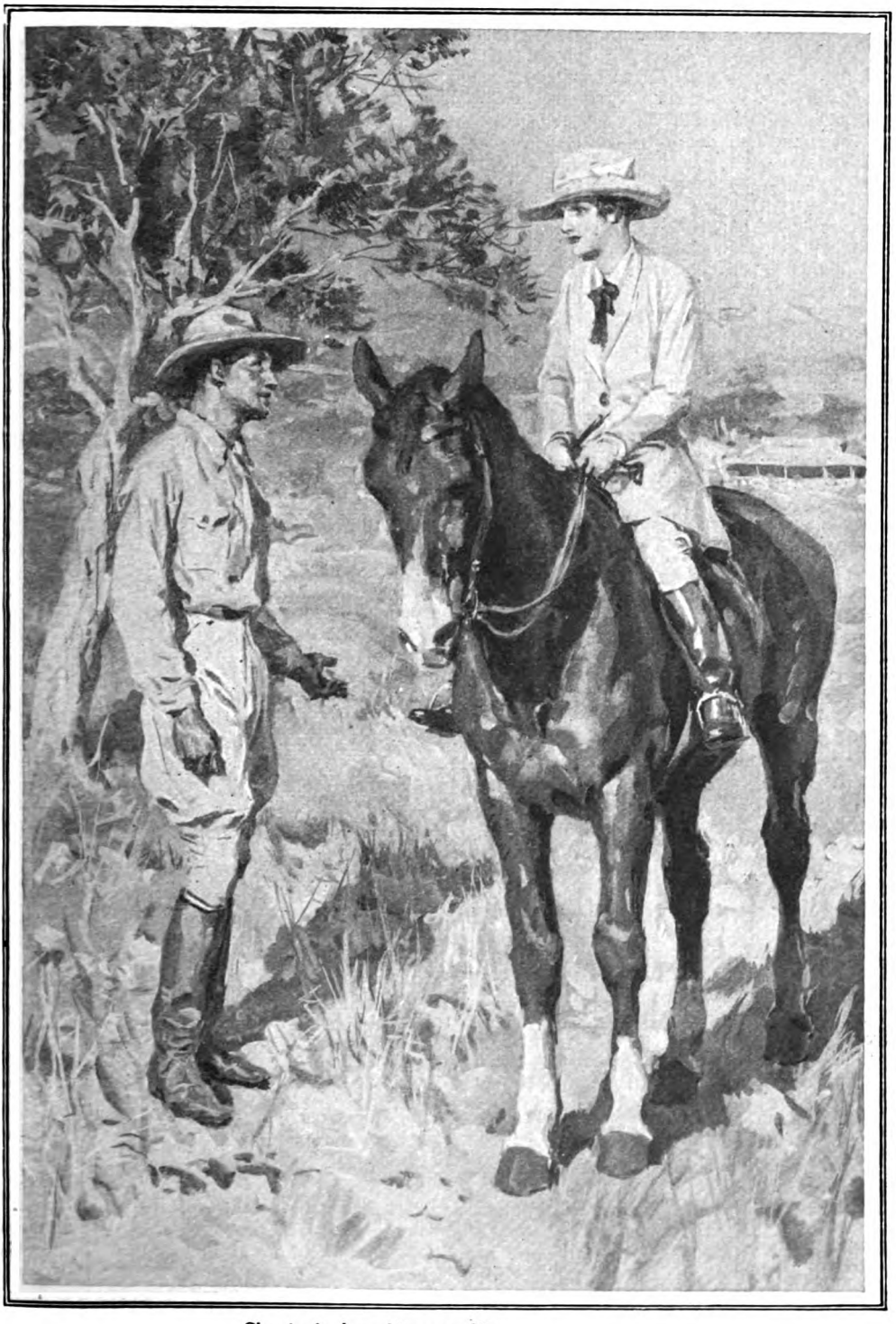
And his hand closed over hers in the way there is no mistaking. She turned slowly and stared at him, and then caught her breath at the look in his eyes. She knew instantly what was coming; knew there was no way of stopping it. He was down on his knees beside her, his arms flung round her waist, his face buried in her lap. And for a space he went mad.

Hardly hearing—almost numbed with the suddenness of this new complication—she sat listening to the wild dreams of the man who called himself Brown. He was cured—with her help he had fought and won.

"For God's sake, don't leave me, Beryl!" he said, again and again. "Listen, dear—we'll get married. And now that I'm all right, we'll go back to England under my proper name. I'll get a job—I've got influence. And when they know I'm cured there won't be any difficulty."

He raised his face, and with blinding clearness she saw him for what he was. Before he had just been a case—a mission: now he was very much a man. A man grown old before his time, with the ineffaceable ravages of drink plain to see: a man with bloodshot, puffy eyes and trembling limbs: a travesty.

And yet, ghastly in its mercilessness though the picture was, in some strange way



She looked at him steadily.
"Why do you stay if you don't like it?"

she seemed to see another one. Shining through this terrible mask she saw the man as he had been—clear-eyed, firm-lipped, with the pride of youth in every line of his body. And a pity that was almost divine took hold of her. She leaned forward and put her hand on his hair—and it was the hair of the man who had been that she touched. She kissed him on the forehead, and it was the forehead of the man in uniform—the man who had won the Grand Military—that she kissed.

And then he, with a little gasp of wonder, seized her hungrily and kissed her on the mouth. And Beryl Kingswood sat rigid: the dream had gone—reality had come back. The man who had kissed her lips was the man who called himself Jim Brown—the drunkard.

He was mad—incoherent with joy. He couldn't believe it: he went on pacing up and down the veranda, painting wild dreams of the future. And every now and then he would stop and kiss the back of her neck—and touch her arm almost humbly.

"Stop and have dinner with me, dear," he said, "on this wonderful night of nights. I'll take you back afterwards."

And because she was incapable of clear thought—because she was dazed by the result of what she had done in that one instant—she stayed to dinner. What was she going to do? How was she ever going to tell him? And gradually as the hours passed the thing began to get clearer. Dinner was over—a meal at which he had proudly drunk orange-juice and water. And now, sitting once again on the stoep in the darkness, her hand in his, it didn't seem so very terrible. She would go through with it: she would marry him, and bring him back to what he had been. She had put her hand to the plough—she would not turn back.

"We'll make good, my dear," she whispered, impulsively. "We'll make good between us."

Very tenderly and reverently he bent and kissed her hand.

"You utterly marvellous girl," he said.

And for a space there was silence, broken only by the ceaseless noise of the tree beetles.

IV.

THUS did the man who called himself Brown struggle to the foot-hills from which a glimpse of Heaven may be got. And Fate ordained that he should remain there for just one week—a week during which only one person mattered, the wonderful girl who had promised to marry him. He got a tablecloth from the neighbouring store, and carefully mended the broken teapot handle with seccotine, so as to be able to give her tea when she came over to see him. He laid in stocks of grub, and got bowls in which he arranged flowers for her benefit. And, perhaps greatest wonder of all, the twelve full bottles under his bed remained full.

Of the other side of the case he knew nothing—how should he? He had not been in the Merricks' bedroom on the night they had learned what had happened—the night he had walked over with Beryl after she had dined with him. He had not seen Julia Merrick positively seize her husband as he came in, and almost shake him in her excitement.

"Tom—it's too horrible!"

"It's pretty grim, I admit," he remarked. "Still, I don't see what's to be done about it. She seems to have made up her mind."

"It isn't as if she loved him even."

"What's that?" said her husband. "Doesn't she love him?"

"Of course she doesn't. How could she?"

"I dunno. Women do some damned funny things at times. Has she told you she doesn't?"

"Don't be an absolute idiot," cried Julia Merrick. "Do you suppose another woman wants to be told a thing like that? You've only got to see them together. Why, he—he almost repels her."

Tom Merrick yawned hugely.

"Well, my dear—it's beyond me. If he repels her, why the deuce has she gone and got engaged to him?"

"Because she's sorry for him. Because she thinks it her job. Because she thinks she's cured him. Because—oh! a thousand reasons—and not one of them the right one. And from what I know of Beryl, she'll carry the thing through."

Her husband turned over sleepily.

"We'd better talk it over, my dear. In the morning," he added, hopefully.

"There's nothing to talk over," said his wife. "The thing's unnatural. It's—it's ghastly. Are you asleep?"

"More or less, my dear."

"Well, become a little less for a moment. Do you honestly and conscientiously believe that that man is cured?"

"Difficult to say," he grunted. "Personally, I wouldn't trust him a yard. Think he's a hopeless case. Still, you never can tell."

"Tom, if Beryl were your daughter—would you allow it?"

"Good God! no!" he cried. "What an idea!"

"All right," said his wife, quietly. "You can go to sleep now."

And lay awake herself staring into the darkness. Dimly she had feared during the

past few weeks that some such complication might occur, but never had she dreamed that Beryl would go to the length of promising to marry the man. That he might fall in love with her she had realized was more than likely: many men did fall in love with Beryl Kingswood. But that she would accept him seemed so staggeringly outrageous that she could still hardly believe it.

What to do? That was the problem.

AND as the days passed by it became more acute. She was almost frightened of mentioning the matter to Beryl, because it seemed to make her shut up like an oyster. Obviously she didn't want to discuss it; just as obviously her nerves were strung up to the danger point. And Julia Merrick could have screamed with the futility of it.

Her husband was no help.

"What can I do, my dear?" he said, continually. "They're both of age. If Beryl chooses to marry the man I don't see how we can prevent her. She's her own mistress. She knows the danger she is running as well as we do. He certainly seems to have kept off the drink these last few weeks."

"Couldn't you have a talk with him as man to man?" she urged. "Say to him that it isn't fair to marry her until he is *sure*. That he ought to give it a year at least."

"I'll have a try," he said, doubtfully. "But I tell you frankly, Julia, that fellow Brown is a queer customer to tackle. He's got a way of looking at you which says 'Go to the devil,' plainer than any language. Drunkard though he is, I give you my word that there are times when he makes me feel like a boy in front of a master."

"He's coming over to-night," said his wife. "Get him alone and try."

But it wasn't necessary; as I have said, Fate ordained that Jim Brown should stay on the foot-hills for just one week. And that night the week was up. Why he should have approached the Merricks' bungalow from behind instead of going to the front door is just one of those things that happen without reason. But he did—and found himself looking into the room that Julia Merrick called the work-room. Beryl was sitting at the table, and her name was trembling on the tip of his tongue when she looked up and he saw her face. And it seemed as if the world stood still.

He stood there rooted to the spot, staring at hopeless, abject misery and despair. Just for one moment he clutched at the wild hope that she had had bad news. But only for a moment; it wasn't mail day. There could be only one cause—and he knew it. Standing motionless in the darkness he watched this girl who meant salvation to him—watched her as some stranger might have watched her—impersonally. He felt conscious of only one dominant thought—to find out the truth.

SUDDENLY the door opened and Julia Merrick came in. He saw her pause for a moment, staring at Beryl; then he heard her speak with a sudden rush.

"My dear, now I know. You *can't* do this thing."

And heard the other answer.

"I *must!*"

He crept nearer the window; he had to hear everything now.

"Why did you do it, Beryl?"

He listened to the girl's puzzled—almost halting—explanation. And because the man who called himself Jim Brown had been a person of much understanding before he became a drunkard, he understood perfectly that which only exasperated Julia Merrick.

"He must be told," said that lady, decisively. "If you don't—I shall."

"If you do, Julia," said the girl, "I will never forgive you. I absolutely forbid you to tell him."

She stood up, facing the older woman squarely.

"Absolutely, you understand. I'm going through with it. I would never forgive myself if I started him off again."

"I wish to Heaven he'd have another outburst now—before it's too late," said the other. "Beryl—the risk is too ghastly. I know he's kept off it for a week or two—but he's a hopeless case. Tom says so. At least, my dear—say that you'll wait a year. Make him prove himself to that extent."

The girl shook her head.

"No, dear, I won't. I believe I can pull him through if I'm with him the whole time. And I can't be that unless I marry him. My mind is made up, Julia," she went on, quietly. "I shall marry him whatever you say. And he's got to go on believing that I'm fond of him, or half my influence will be gone."

Julia Merrick shrugged her shoulders helplessly.

"So be it, Beryl. It's your choice. But I think you're making a terrible mistake."

"Perhaps I am," said the girl. "But a mistake is better than a sin. And it would be a sin to turn him down now, when he has fought so hard. Let's go, Julia; he ought to be here soon."

The light went out; the room was empty. She would be in the drawing-room by now—sitting in the chair she usually occupied.

He had only to go round to the front door and walk in, and he would see her get up with that grave little smile of hers and hold out both her hands. And she would say :—

"How goes it, old lad ?"

And he would answer: "Quite well, my dear—quite well."

And she would say: "Well played, partner."

Yes—just go round to the front door and walk in. Wipe these last few minutes off the slate—pretend they had never been. A grave smile flickered round his lips—half cynical, half tender. Then, lifting his hand to the salute, the man who called himself Brown turned and walked away into the night.

V.

"I'LL come with you, Beryl," said Tom. Over the girl's shoulder he glanced significantly at his wife. It was ten o'clock, and dinner was long since over—the dinner to which Jim Brown had been bidden and failed to appear.

"All right," said Beryl, quietly. "Just as you like."

In silence they set out on their twenty-minute walk. The glorious African moon made it almost as light as day, and it wasn't until they came in sight of Jim Brown's bungalow that Tom Merrick spoke again.

"My dear," he said, gravely, "for God's sake don't be too disappointed if—if——"

"Please don't," she said. "I'd sooner not talk."

It was as they were walking up the rise to his house that they suddenly heard his voice.

"Parade ! 'Shun ! "

And the girl stopped dead with a little gasp.

"Let me go first," said Tom Merrick.

"No," said Beryl, firmly. "You wait outside."

She crossed the veranda and pushed open the door. In perfect dressing on the floor stood eleven empty bottles, and on the table in front of him one that was half full. And in front of the eleven was the teapot.

"That gentleman," he said, gravely indicating the latter, "is the commanding officer. Don't you think he's rather a good-looker ? "

"Jim," she said, steadily, "we were expecting you to dinner."

"The devil you were, my dear," he answered. "That's a bit of a break on my part."

"What are those doing there ?" She pointed to the row of bottles.

"My soldiers, darling," he explained. "I took them out for an airing to-night. To spare your feelings, up to date I've kept them in barracks under the bed, but the little chaps insisted on a field day to-night."

"You mean to say that you've been drinking all this time ? "

Her voice was unutterably weary.

"Honesty, my pet, compels me to admit the fact. It was my innate politeness which made me disguise the fact in view of your well-meant efforts on my behalf. Ah ! my friend, Mr. Merrick, I see. One of those honest pillars of the soil that have made our glorious Empire what it is."

"So you've lied to me," she whispered. "All this while. Oh ! my God ! "

And just for one brief moment did the man who had tipped eleven full bottles of whisky down the sink that night falter. Then he steadied himself and rode at the last fence.

"My dear," he said, gravely, "lie is an ugly word. Shall we say—prevaricated charmingly ? "

"A hopeless case, my dear," said Tom Merrick, as they neared his bungalow. "He'd gone too far."

And the hopeless case sat at his table staring with hopeless eyes into the night. The bottle in front of him was empty. At last he rose, and with meticulous attention to dressing he placed it in line with the others. He called the squadron to attention and then dismissed them.

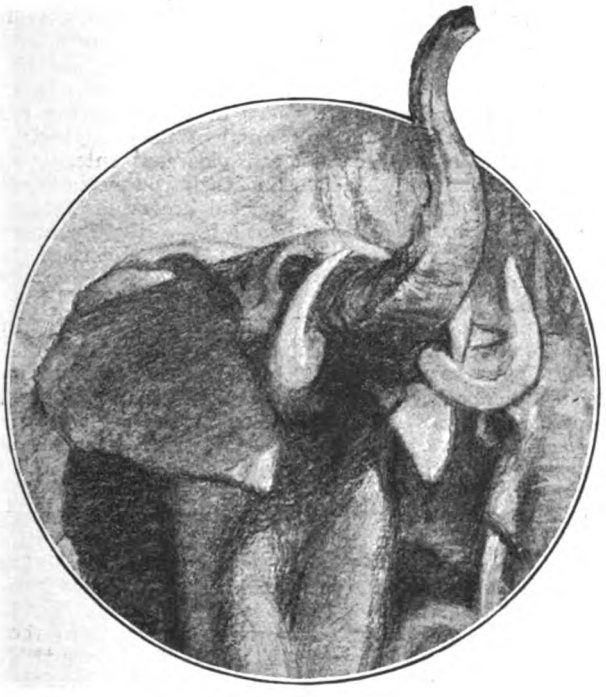
And for a space there was silence, broken only by the ceaseless noise of the tree beetles.

NEXT MONTH:

A NEW SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY:

"The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place"

By A. CONAN DOYLE



THE SECRET PLACE

By

PAUL ANNIXTER

Illustrated by
S. TRESILIAN

I.

FOR the second time that day the shrill trumpeting of the wild elephants came echoing from afar over steppes and jungled valleys to disturb El Robo in his mud-bath. In all the wild there is nothing so stirring, so insistent, as the wild elephant call—that prolonged and concerted trumpeting known to elephant-catchers as the salute—which the wild herds make on certain occasions, the exact nature of which has ever been a mystery.

El Robo, being an elephant, could read the meaning of those sounds. They told of a ceremony, a ritual in honour of a monarch. A newly-coronated monarch, a doughty and mandatory monarch, and doubtless a young one. All this El Robo read into that call, and it rankled him to the depths of his cantankerous nature. For he was by way of being a monarch himself: a monarch, however, of the untrammelled, the unsurveyed, recognizing neither law nor boundaries. He was an outlaw, or what is commonly known as a "rogue" elephant, as his name implied

El Robo was known, and generally feared and hated, from the Zambesi River in the south to the unknown region of the Sudd in the north; from British East Africa to the Niam-Niam country in the west. He was a trouble-maker, one of those savage cases of atavism peculiar to nature in the animal as well as the human family. His life had been typical of his kind. As a raw youngster of fifteen years he had been cast forth from his herd for ill-temper and general viciousness. A drastic measure, it would seem, but the wise old herd leaders had doubtless been able to predict even at that early age the bane of the young bull's future. Since that day full eighty summers had passed over his head and not one of them had gone to improve his disposition. The fact was, he had gone beyond redemption, for like all hermits, human or otherwise, he had lost his perspective. He could see nothing now—at least, nothing worth while—but himself.

THE life had not all been harsh and lean. There is satisfaction of a sort in simply being a chronic crank, with unlimited time to humour one's whims, with private mud-baths and undisputed feeding grounds, and neither law nor females to curtail one's peregrinations. El Robo loved the silence, the sense of aloneness, the constant watchfulness and dangerous exploration that composed his life. After all was said, he was what he was by choice. For he had known the other life, too. He had made a conquest of a whole herd on more than one occasion in his prime, pitting himself victoriously against all the leading bulls. But of that he had soon sickened, and in a month or two months of lordship his perversity of nature had set the entire herd against him according to the unwritten law of elephant rule, or else El Robo had simply wandered off himself, on some night of calling wind or moonshine, back to his tenantless hills and fastnesses.

As a result he had become hated far and wide by his kind, by what jungle wireless there is no knowing, so that by the time he was a battle-scarred, yellow-tusked veteran of sixty he had but to show himself to a herd to call down upon him all the challenge and anathema the elephant tongue possesses. And El Robo returned that hatred in full measure. Solitude and enforced asceticism embittered his naturally evil nature, until the vicious light of the killer shone ever in his little red eyes. In the past thirty years he had broken every law and precept of his world. He would rather fight than eat. He hated not only his own kind, but man as well, and that was how he had come by his name.

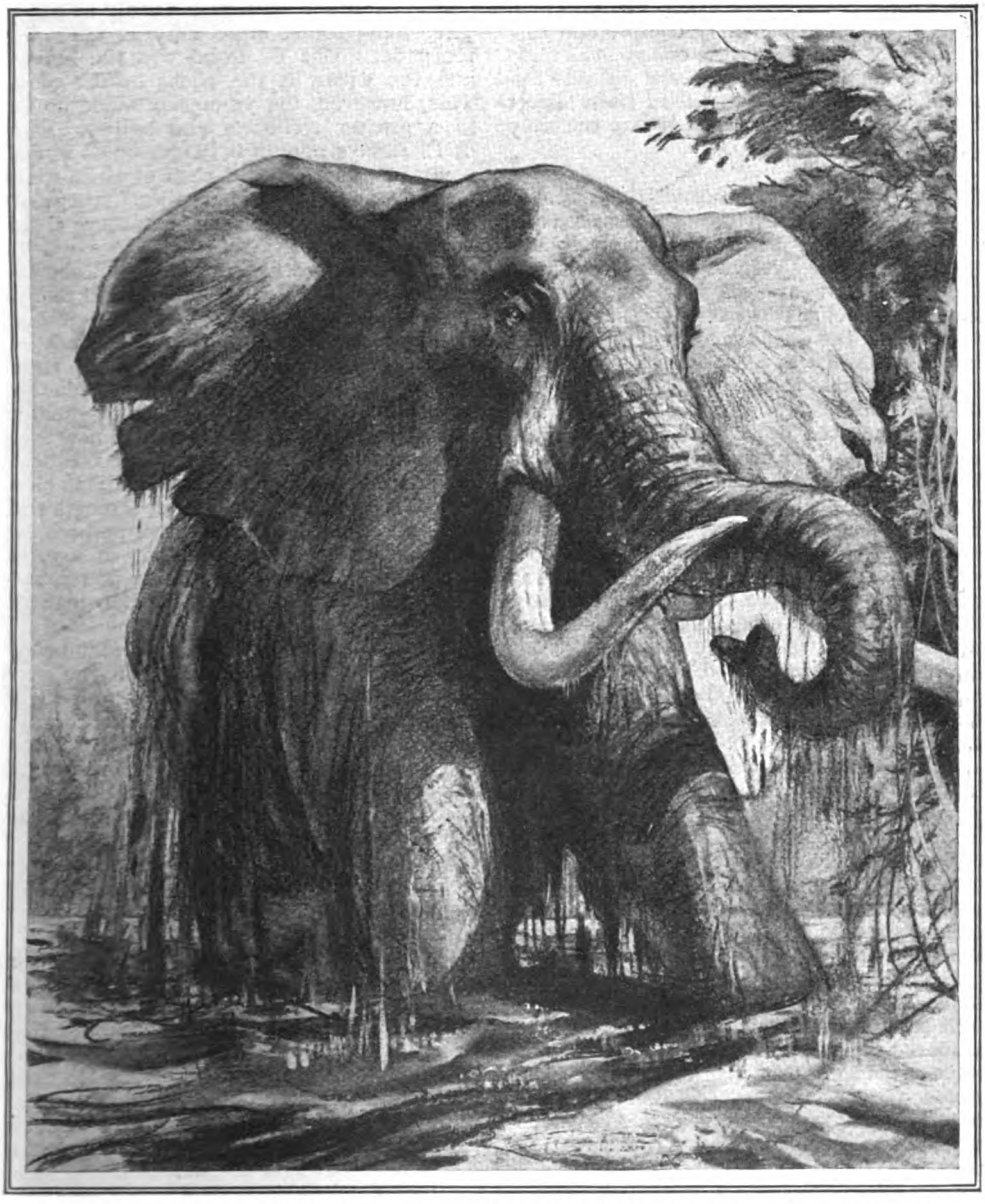
But more than anything else, perhaps, El Robo hated youth, and the arrogance of youth, especially as the encroachment of age began to creep over him. The bitterness of all his nature rose at the sight or sound of the confident young twenty-five-year-olds just entering upon their amours and their conquests in all the happiness of normal gregarian natures. He had ended not a few of these youngsters' careers at the outset, by the wiles of the seasoned fighter, and his rancour ever grew as the years passed over him.

This that had roused him to-day was the salute to the strength and prowess of youth; his nameless elephant instinct sensed that. He was already a centenarian. Fifteen years at the most remained to him, years that would be increasingly lean and precarious, for it is not well for the aged to be hated and alone.

A spasmodic lunge brought the renegade's mighty bulk heaving up from the river. It was only then that his gigantic size became manifest. It was as if the mud were giving birth to a mountain, like some mighty primal stirring from the ooze of creation. El Robo stood over twelve feet high to the top of his great sloping shoulders, and his trunk could reach seven feet beyond that. With his long, sinister head, the evil set of his little eyes, his huge ears that were bigger than his head and relics of the Pleistocene Age, and the bad backward slope to his gaunt back, El Robo was one of a dying race, nearest of kin to the primordial cousin of all elephants, the mammoth which has long since perished from the earth.

Something hot and molten seemed to rise up and burst in El Robo's brain, and his fierce pig eyes glowed red. Then his trunk flung upward, stiffened sinuously backward, and forth across the drowsing jungle went his full-voiced challenge, a shivering blare that crashed the noon somnolence to atoms, whipped every sleeping thing to tension for a mile around.

El Robo stood waiting for a space of moments, quivering throughout his limbs, half expectant, his great fan ears waving to catch the slightest echo, yet fearing the usual insult of silence. And then, from afar across the hills, faint as a bugle in some distant camp, came an answering challenge. El Robo plunged up the bank with a great puff of sheer surprise. This was youth indeed, a mere stripling doubtless, who had **not** yet learned, or was too arrogant to care, about the renegade's ignoble record. Once more he sent forth his shivering blare. Then like a runaway railway carriage, or a house bounding on the wings of a great wind, his little eyes rolling with an



A spasmodic lunge brought the renegade's mighty bulk heaving up from the river.

unholy light, El Robo went thundering down the trail.

No one who has not seen him prove it can realize what speed an elephant possesses when he cares to use it. A fine-running horse would have been unable to keep abreast of El Robo in the open spaces. In the tangle of thickets he would have been hopelessly lost. For El Robo neither stopped nor slackened. He snapped big trees off at their bases, and the small ones clattered backward along the slope of his mighty back. Like an avalanche he thundered full speed down a valley, his great feet plying with a cat-like surety, because of the wonderful conformity of his muscles.

Many months, more than two years, had passed since he had locked with any sort of adversary in combat. All the banked-up venom of his nature called for outlet; and

the years of abstinence called for payment. Few young bulls of thirty could stand him off for more than a minute or two even now. He would reap a last revenge on this upstart, and perhaps on the herd itself, assert his mastery one last time and sate the envy of encroaching senility.

THE herd was drawn up waiting when El Robo arrived. All feeding had ceased and the fighting circle was already in formation, for every elephant knew what was coming. There are set laws and niceties governing such affairs in the elephant world, as strict as the duelling rules of man. The leader of the herd, a tall rangy young bull of thirty years, stood well apart from the others. Behind him, forming a sort of semicircle, were the other herd bulls and the leading cows. Contrary to general belief, it is the old cows, not the bulls, who lead the roaming herds throughout the greater portion of the year, except during the two or three months of the pairing season.

The renegade slowed his thundering advance to a walk and stamped belligerently into the waiting circle, raising his trunk again to renew his initial challenge. But ere he could utter a sound he was cut short, for the young leader had repeated the challenge himself with a brazen assurance that was staggering.

El Robo returned the defiance with such heat that he ended in a squeal of berserk rage. This formality over, before the herd had done shifting to accommodate the fighters, the old rogue precipitated the combat by a sudden wicked charge that was minus all the dignity if not the decent technicalities of the game. His blood was like lava in his veins; something trickled like acid in his perverse brain. He shook his lowered head, and his mighty eleven-foot tusks, each of which was heavier than a man and had shattered the tusks of a score of formidable fighters in his day, gleamed like yellow scimitars. A less mighty opponent than the young leader would have been thrown at the outset by that unexpected rush, but the herd leader gathered himself with a tigerish swiftness and met it at an expert angle which enabled him to take up the shock with a bit of agile leg-work.

Then ensued that most awe-inspiring spectacle in all nature, the prolonged test of strength and endurance of the real monarchs of the jungle. The ground shook beneath their trampling feet. They lunged and trumpeted and bellowed; their rushes carried them again and again through the closed ranks of the watchers, sending the calves and young cows of the herd in squealing flight.

The two bulls were quite evenly matched. The young leader stood fully as tall as the renegade. But El Robo was the heavier and the wilier in the tricks of the game. This, however, the youngster made up for in a greater resilience and agility. Each of El Robo's mightiest lunges failed to find a vital contact, and at each of these feints on the youngster's part the renegade's rage rose higher, while his assurance ebbed an unconscious degree.

By the end of five minutes El Robo became aware that he had judged a bit rashly, if not dangerously. His instinct told him that he would be put to the limit of his powers to carry off a victory. There was nothing like trepidation within his brain-pan, for the elephant is too primitive and tremendous an organism to know fear. But he saw as soon as his wrath cooled that here he was not going to land a killing blow—that it would be a matter of strength and endurance. For the first time, perhaps, he felt the definite encroachment of age, of the waning of his old craft and power, and that is a terrible realization for man or animal.

For a time the watching herd maintained silence. But gradually, as the battle grew fiercer, rumbles, squeals, and trumpets of excitement burst from the encircling cordon; the old bulls rocked back and forth, waved their trunks, and lifted their fore-feet to thud the earth as the toxin of battle entered their blood. It was for all the world like the stamping applause from a ringside.

An hour wore by, and a second hour was well along, and still no definite advantage had been gained by either opponent. Both had inflicted severe punishment.

A third hour wore on, and the waning light of afternoon had given way to dusk, and still the tide of battle had not taken a definite turn. By now the renegade realized that he had tried all the tricks in his trunk, so to speak, as well as the limit of his strength. And then the young bull suddenly exhibited some of the craft that had won him his place. In an unguarded moment he suddenly charged with a redoubled strength, wholly unlooked for. The unexpectedness of the thing overthrew the renegade's balance, sent him crashing to the earth. The ring of watchers surged forward in a grey wave, but it was not the end. As the leader towered over him, El Robo came up suddenly with a sidewise lunge of flashing tusk that all but turned the tables, laying bare a great gash across the other's shoulder. But thereafter it became evident that the tide of battle was slowly turning. The young leader was winning, not through craft, but tireless endurance and youth's power of instant recovery. The renegade's

charges grew weaker by degrees, until he was forced at last to play the pure defensive, while the youngster's attacks seemed not to have weakened at all. His inexhaustible energy was not to be resisted, and even when an opening presented itself now, El Robo was unable to take advantage of it.

IT was a last desperate trick on the part of El Robo himself that ended the battle. Choosing a strategic moment, he left his right flank purposely unguarded. The young bull saw as intended, but El Robo had misjudged his lightning agility. The leader wheeled and lunged with the shock of a catapult. In the darkness no eye could follow what happened, but there came the sound as of mighty boulders crashing together in a landslide, a rumble of pain, and the renegade was down. One of his yellowed tusks had split, and a third of its length snapped off from the shock of the side blow, while blood ran from his open mouth from a deep internal wound. All saw as the young bull towered above him that the battle was over.

Some signal or intimation of defeat must have passed between the foes, for El Robo was allowed to rise. Then, with head and trunk lowered in token of withdrawal, the renegade backed slowly from the circle, breathing and coughing stertorously, into the dark of the surrounding jungle, leaving the young bull to blare his victorious trumpet to the night.

The sound of the herd's answering salute stung and rankled in the renegade's ears as he limped away through the dew-drenched forest. He moved with ponderous slowness now, for his injuries were deep and serious. Before the end of an hour, standing in the thick dark of a deep, wet glen, it came to El Robo that those wounds were final—that he was not to recover. How or whence this came there is no telling, but his instincts knew, as infallibly as any premonition of the spirit ever known to man.

And out of that something came from the unseen and touched him. A Call, something from out the ancient herd-spirit of his kind, that pulled him irrepressibly toward that final resting-place, the Elephant Tombs, that had been chosen in ages past by the oldest and wisest of his race. It was an urge, mysterious and inevitable as the movement of the planets and the migration of birds, to find those secret fastnesses, zealously guarded from man and all other animals, where the elephants go when the first warnings of death steal over them. That is why it is that no hunter in the wilderness ever comes upon the remains of elephants who have died from natural causes. Only by rarest chance are these secret burial-places ever discovered; like the legendary burial reefs of the sperm whale of the south seas, they are always in the most remote and inaccessible places.

El Robo did not reason this out. Simply came the impulse to seek a last sanctuary. He did not know where the Place of Death was, only his mysterious elephant sense knew. But it was far, and the time that remained was none too long. Following the urge, he set off southward through the wilderness, steadily and unhurried, toward the wild mountainous region of the Kilimanjaro, whence the Call came strongest.

II.

NOW it happened that other ears than those of the old rogue had marked the disturbance in the wild elephant herd during the past two days. From his safari camp only a mile down the river, Neil McQuestion, elephant scout and promoter for the British Ivory Syndicate in the hinterland, had listened with interest to the far-off trumpeting. As it happened, he had been following the tracks of this particular herd for days, and from the knowledge gained during twenty years' jungle experience he had read in the far sounds something of extraordinary moment.

For two weeks McQuestion had been cruising about this particular vicinity with half-a-dozen black carriers at his back, watching, studying the signs of the elephant trails. He was not out on a mere elephant hunt. Something of far greater moment was actuating him. In his time he had been favoured with strange insights into the elephant arcanum, both in India and Africa—into their rites and customs pertaining to mating, into their laws and formalities of combat, their punishment of criminals among their ranks, and the weird ceremonial gatherings that take place among the great beasts at certain seasons that are like prolonged and rhythmic dances. But there was something he had not seen, nor had any other white man to his knowledge, and it was toward this end he had been bringing to bear for months past all the knowledge gained in half a lifetime in the tropics.

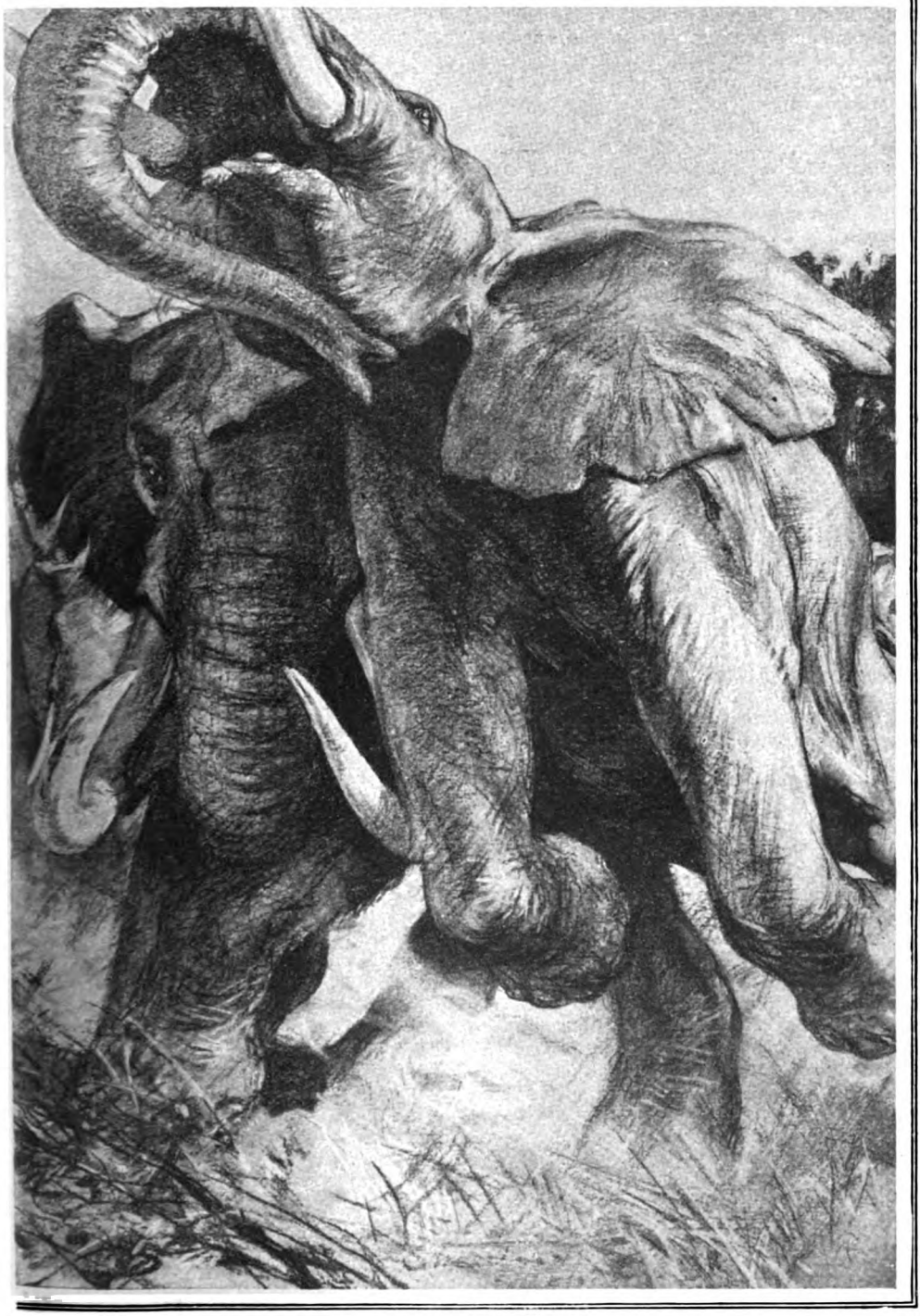
The day before, when one of his carriers had come in with the report of El Robo's gigantic tracks seen along the river bank, McQuestion had gone forth and studied the lone bull, all unknown, with the aid of a powerful field-glass. He had marked the old rogue at once for the outlaw he was, and that afternoon, when he heard the renegade's challenge accepted by the leader of

the distant herd, he had left his camp unaccompanied, and scouted on foot toward the scene of the battle. On his lean, seal-brown face, beneath a battered French shako, a growing light as of coals fanned by a breeze had begun to glow, for it seemed just possible now that the thing for which he had so long waited might be about to transpire.

With the utmost caution he manœuvred

to a point of vantage less than a hundred yards from the scene of the conflict, where, in the crotch of a giant forest tree, he settled himself to wait and watch. Nearer he dare not go without putting the entire herd to flight, but from his high perch he could train his glasses upon the distant battle, a scene such as few men have ever had opportunity to witness. But the struggle itself was not the thing which held McQuestion through those long hours; it was the possible result. Finally the coming of darkness cut off all but the sounds of the distant battle; and still another hour passed before the mighty commotion quieted, and the high, strident blare of victory apprised McQuestion's discriminating ear as to the identity of the conqueror.

This was the moment for which he had waited, but now under the enshrouding darkness his purpose was blocked. He had not approached to within fifty yards before he sensed, rather than heard, the wild band melting away into the forest. A few faint rustlings, the distant snapping of twigs, and the night had swallowed the great beasts and all evidence of their going. And with them the wounded rogue had also disappeared



Then ensued that most awe-inspiring spectacle in all nature, the prolonged test of strength and endurance of the real monarchs of the jungle.

Standing in the trampled arena of the fight, nostrils tingling to the smell of fresh blood and dust, McQuestion sensed the mortal issue that had marked the end of that conflict, but no more could be done now till the dawn, so he made rough camp for the night and slept. With the first light of day, having left a sign by which his carriers might follow, he was off upon the lone trail of El Robo. That trail led him straight south, and it was marked by bloody signs, signs which increased rather than diminished as he went. Also he marked other things; for instance, that El Robo stopped neither to eat nor drink, and that he had travelled with total disregard of caution, facts which quickened the man's pulses with every mile.

The trail led directly away from the jungle lands toward what is known in the hinterland as the steppe-country—a desolate, almost treeless waste that stretches through the East African interior about the base of Mount Kilimanjaro and the southern Rift Valleys.

He was a master tracker, and throughout the killing hours of midday heat he followed doggedly on, across a flaming and waterless land that stretched away to the little-known mountains in the south.

The question that burned ever more insistent in McQuestion's brain as the day advanced was why any elephant should seek to penetrate this region, beyond the last tree line, beyond all chance of forage or water. The one answer seemed to be that the wounded bull was seeking a last sanctuary, and McQuestion knew all that that might imply.

THE close of afternoon found him more than twenty miles into the heart of the waste land, in a region wild and sinister. Jumbled rocks lay everywhere as far as the eye could see; stunted, spear-like bushes lifted vicious heads aloft as if threatening all who dared to penetrate their domain. Yet still the trail of the wounded bull led on into the south toward the far foothills of the Kilimanjaro. McQuestion's small supply of food was already nearly gone, as was the water in his canteen, but he gave no heed to that. Not for anything would he have turned back now.

Up the fissured side of an isolated crater which commanded the surrounding country he climbed as the last of the daylight waned. With his glasses he raked the landscape round about for sign of a familiar landmark, but the territory was all strange to him. All directions had come to look alike. Then he saw that the cone he had climbed was no isolated peak, as he had thought, but part of a continuous spur of rugged slopes stretching away to the south-west. The land had stirred in its sleep at some far-off time, shouldering up a ten-mile chain of peaks, and sinking the intervening chasms.

An early moon had risen from behind the eastern slopes, flooding the land in a weird milky obscurity. His body taxed by now beyond all ordinary endurance, McQuestion could go no farther. His eyes were dry and rasped in their sockets, his body seemed banked with clinkers. Drinking the remainder of his water, he dropped down where he was and lay for a long time like a spent animal. Before he knew it, the drunken sleep of exhaustion took him and he lay where he was without stirring for the rest of the night.

The sting of the risen sun jerked him up at last, in full possession of his senses. He ate what food he had, and once more took up the trail of El Robo, which led now directly along the line of volcanic peaks. An hour later the trickle of water ahead of him sent a maddening thrill throughout his whole being, and drove him forward at a stumbling run. A tiny streamlet ran out of the mountain-side, flowing doubtless from some lake imprisoned in the heart of the crater above. Flinging himself down beside the stream he drank long, then laved his parched face and neck. Not far above him he saw that the stream bed was crushed into mud by the passage of elephants—not one but numbers—and the trail of the wounded rogue was lost among them. The tracks led directly upward now, and McQuestion followed. The way was treacherous, pitted with slag, and deceitful as old honeycomb. He gained the top at last, amid jagged teeth of lava that sliced his flesh and garments.

Here he looked down upon a nest of wild valleys and lesser craters, of a strange and curious formation. There was no end to them, each like the other, radiating from the base of the mountain, their walls of volcanic rock.

McQuestion began his investigations by falling down a rock-slide. He brought up at the mouth of a cavern, bruised and bleeding. The cavern seemed to lead directly into the heart of the mountain. McQuestion decided to explore it, and entered cautiously, but could not go far without lighting a faggot. The cavern led downward along a winding course. Penetrating odours assailed him as he progressed, as if the very heart of the mountain had gone corrupt. The thing that kept him pressing forward now was the renewed signs of elephant spoor he saw, and marks where the great beasts had scraped against the cavern walls in passing. What

McQuestion decided to explore the cavern.

was it that had brought them into such a place?

All at once the passage debouched around a turn and McQuestion found himself standing no more than a hundred feet above the valley he had looked down upon. A precarious trail wound downward, and, flinging down his faggot, McQuestion followed on, a great and mounting excitement in his breast. This trail, too, had been made by elephants. As he neared the valley bottom, his instinct of the wild told the man that here was one of those rare spots of earth which are still utterly wild and virgin, where the foot of man has never trod before, and few beasts. A forgotten place, a place of death, McQuestion felt all that even before he made his final unbelievable discovery.

The bottom of the valley was so narrow that the sun rarely entered it, the contours of the hemming cliffs inexpressibly grotesque and remote. And now what he had taken in the dim light for a jumbled mass of lava formation littering the floor of the gorge appeared suddenly to his starting eyes as a field of whitened bones. Yes, there was no doubting it. Elephant fossil—huger than any McQuestion had ever seen. It lay scattered along the gorge as far as he could see,

some of it so ancient that the bones were honeycombed by time.

A hoarse cry broke from McQuestion's lips. The thing was well-nigh unthinkable. Following those vague intuitive promptings of his he had come at last upon the very place he had sought so long—one of those legendary spots which every ivory hunter in Africa dreams of finding—an elephant burial-ground, one of the Secret Places of the Wild, untellably old, where a thousand generations of elephants had come to die. Beneath his feet, free as the light or the air, lay an almost unimaginable treasure of ivory, his for the taking! And no man knew but he. No other human foot had ever trod this valley floor.

With no outward sign to tell of the seething excitement that gripped him, he moved on down the valley, poking and peering here and there, climbing over colossal mounds of fossil. But in his grey, sun-drained eyes there was a growing light, a light such as only the magic of hidden treasure can inflame.

It was weird, and there was no end to it. The heat became dense and well-nigh intolerable, and myriads of insects infested the place, mostly elephant flies. He picked his way amid mighty leg bones as big round as a man's body, and traversed long arcades of arching ribs, seven feet high, with spread enough to form the framework of primitive houses. There were skull bones that looked like giant boulders, and scattered amid all were the giant tusks, uncountable, and still in perfect preservation.

Here and there caverns extended for a considerable distance into the canyon walls, and these, too, were choked with the fossil. McQuestion was still picking his way amid the jumble of bones when from behind him came a sudden warning—a feeling that danger was near. Then a shadow came across the sun. Hard upon that the air was shivered by a braying as of trumpets and the crash of brass, and the ground shook with the rush of a mighty form.

Whirling in panic, McQuestion slipped and fell amid the bones. What he saw in that instant was a grey and hairy mountain of elephant flesh rising upward from the ground and thundering down upon him—a bull elephant with the eyes of a demon and one tusk broken sharp off! It was none other than El Robo. The old rogue had reached its sanctuary at last. For seven hours he had lain here patiently waiting the end, amid all these others whose skeletons lay round about. Like a fallen tree of the forest, or any of the natural things of nature, he had been waiting for the sun and the earth to take him back, while the spirit within him relinquished strand by strand the bonds of flesh. There was a nobility in it, a lonely majesty such as man never attains. Already the haze of death was dimming his eyes when this interloper, scuffling profanely amid the dead, roused him to a sudden consciousness of insane fury, brought him heaving and puffing to his feet. Why, probably he knew not; he only answered to the ancient and inviolable law of the burial-place that is bred into every wild elephant at birth. He was doomed, and knew it; death had already touched him, but he could not lie at the end with this hated eavesdropper prowling amid the bones of his kind. He must rally for one last effort.

IT was McQuestion's fall that saved him from immediate destruction. The great bull charged in a trice, with the terrifying whistling scream of an elephant in rage. But the hunter's body had slipped into a crevice amid the bones just as the tusker lowered his mighty head to crush him into a shapeless pulp. On either side of McQuestion a huge tusk drove downward amid the bones, as the bull pitched forward to his knees. The man seized one of the tusks in desperation and had just time to wriggle forth beneath the descending trunk and scuttle away on the farther side of the bone pile. But in that instant of proximity his alert brain had registered the fact that the great beast himself could stave off death no more than an hour longer at best.

Even in that predicament McQuestion had had the presence of mind to snatch up his fallen rifle. At a distance of thirty feet he turned and sent a Mauser bullet into the old bull's head—a deliberate brain shot. But to all appearance it had no more effect than a pea-shooter. The thing was incredible, but he attributed it to his exhausted nerves. With a blaring trumpet that shook the narrow canyon like a liner's blast, El Robo came on again, huge blanket ears flapping, twelve good feet from tip to tip, trunk upraised and threshing the air like a whipping black-snake.

McQuestion ran. Ran for his life in cold panic, for the old bull continued to come on, unweakened, tail stiff with wrath, wicked eyes blazing red.

McQuestion was put to it, and called upon the last ounce of his endurance in that ghastly race. The beast had headed him down the valley toward the blind end, and the man's horror was of being penned in some *cul-de-sac*. He tried standing his ground, shouting and waving his arms in the strident " Ahai—Ahai " of the elephant trackers, but he might as well have halloed at a steam engine, for El Robo had never

McQuestion ran for his life in cold panic.

known the fear of man. McQuestion's one advantage was in his nimbleness. He tried to hide in crannies in the cliff sides and fool the monster, but always he was discovered; the little bloodshot eyes of the old bull were demoniac in their sharpness, and glowed with a red frenzy, a pitiless flame that defied death to go on.

Once again McQuestion halted to fire a deliberate shot. He saw the old bull tremble and go to his knees like a landslide, but he came on again, tusks thrown high, in his trunk a dead branch of a tree he had snatched up in his rage and threshed from side to side.

Again McQuestion knelt, and tried to shove the safety catch of his rifle forward for a last shot. It would not budge, for in his last fall he had bent it. The weird feeling came over him then that Fate had entered the game against him like a shadowy third. It gripped and paralysed him and all else was obliterated, nothing mattered. But on came El Robo, great tusks lifted to brain the marauder, huge flat feet raging to blot him into mud. He missed that time by no more than a foot, and McQuestion was all but cornered. With a coolness that was but the numbness of catalepsy, the man dodged, made a deliberate dash across the open for a low cavern in the rockside. His plan was to take refuge there till the old bull died or took himself away, if the cavern were deep enough. He reached it by the narrowest of margins. There was a rush like a wind-squall at his heels, as he flung himself within. Then the bulk of the monster darkened the opening.

The great black trunk came in after him searching the inner crannies of the place, while the man flung himself here and there in desperation to elude it. In those awful moments McQuestion knew the fear that turns men's very blood to ice, leaves them paralysed. The old bull's hot breath blew like a blast in his face, while his trumpeting shook the rock walls, a new note in the call now, far-piercing and insistent. For El Robo in his hour of extremity had forgotten his lifelong grudge and was sending out a call for the co-operation of his kind—the elephants' S.O.S. True and far it carried across the miles of desolate steppes, till it died in a thin far echo amid the hills. Then with tusks and heaving shoulders he fell to tearing and gouging at the low cave entrance, all the strength of his six tons' weight behind him. Falling earth and rock showered down in clouds. A great mass of rock finally loosened and crumbled downward, and it was that and that alone which saved McQuestion's life, as he always maintained in after years. For a great boulder had completely blocked the cave mouth, too great a mass for even El Robo's mighty strength to heave aside. Thereafter his efforts grew weaker by degrees, until at last silence, utter and complete, once more settled over the gorge.

IT may have been minutes or hours later—for time has little count in such emptiness—when next a sound was heard in that valley of the dead that lay forgotten between two toes of the old volcano. It was the hail of McQuestion's six Kroo trackers, as they sighted their chief climbing to meet them out of the valley mouth. The previous afternoon they had taken up McQuestion's trail and had followed on, infallibly as bloodhounds on the scent, for they had been born and bred in the elephant lands.

McQuestion offered no explanation of what had transpired during his absence, and there was that in his manner which forbade all questions. He seemed to have aged ten years, and he had the feeling he would never get a grip on his shattered nerves again. Some of the cold horror of that tableau in the fossil pits remained like a slow poison in his blood—a sort of culmination—and he knew then that he was through with Africa for all time.

Back on the coast, he never told anyone what he had found in the secret valley. A lifetime close to nature and the beasts had bred odd, mystical fancies in McQuestion, things which other men would have held in ridicule. To him the elephants had always stood as the kings and hierophants of the jungle domain. Their burial laws deserved man's reverence, he maintained. The dead monarchs would never be disturbed through him.

A Very Romantic Affair

By

ARNOLD BENNETT

Illustrated by
JOHN CAMPBELL

I.

IT was the Saturday before the August Bank Holiday, and Beach Street, the principal shopping thoroughfare of the great and justly-popular seaside resort of Rustingor, was overrun with crowds, throngs, and multitudes of visitors.

Rustingor, whose prosperity was founded upon a broad, smooth, sandy beach two miles long, had come into prominence in the 'fifties of the nineteenth century, and with all its popularity it had maintained its mid-Victorian architectural character. A dingy, stuccoed town, where everything was cheap, it appealed to parents with more children than money. Admittedly it had defects; but its answer to all accusations was that its unsurpassable beach was a paradise for the little ones and tiny tots. Ninety-nine per cent. of its clients travelled to it third-class, and stayed in boarding-houses or took rooms where they boarded for themselves. Hotels were few, and restaurants almost non-existent.

The shops in Beach Street lacked grandeur and display, but they were full of customers: women who knew the difference between fivepence and sixpence a pound, who wore imitation silk stockings and imitation leather shoes and imitation jewellery—save the wedding-ring, which was invariably of genuine gold.

The side-walks of Beach Street were embarrassed with many perambulators and their pushers and their escorts, and also with young men and young girls, effectively if cheaply dressed, who were obviously determined in due course to have wedding-rings and perambulators of their own. Nothing smart; nothing fashionable—to the aristocratic or the plutocratic; but to the average Rustingor visitor, who knew no better, all was smart and fashionable.

The roadway of Beach Street was embarrassed in its turn with a welter of huge chars-à-bancs, small motor-cars, side-car combinations, motor-cycles, and a few plain foot-driven bicycles; for the progress of civilization had been such that even at Rustingor the majority of pleasure-seekers were quite used to moving to and fro by means of petrol. At the point where a high road crossed Beach Street, white lines to direct drivers had been painted on the tarred macadam according to the London method; and the entire movement of wheels was under the control of a policeman who wore white sleevelets according to the London method. This policeman's job was very difficult and very responsible—and he knew it—for a full half of the drivers were acutely inexperienced and, without being in the least aware of it, were indeed little better than potential killers and maimers and breakers of limbs; sometimes they would manage to assassinate even themselves.

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The august and omnipotent policeman, by means of his white-ended right arm, was holding up all the wheeled traffic in Beach Street in order to allow cross traffic to pass. A youngish man, rather fat—indeed fat—stood on one side of Beach Street, and he desired to get over to the other side, but the vehicles awaiting the fall of the arm of the law were packed so close together that he hesitated to insinuate himself into the press. At last, however, he found a space of eighteen inches between two motor-cars, and stepped into it—only to be prevented from further progress by a van whose driver was creeping up every foot he could steal.

There stood the fat young man, eyed with undisguised interest by all the young women in all the stationary cars. For the young man, though fat, was obviously differentiated from the ruck of those seaside males by his distinguished attire and his distinguished bearing. The humble persons who gazed upon him wondered what *he* could be doing in a place like Rustingor. But the young man showed no self-consciousness. All the young women who saw him compared him with their own young men—to the serious disadvantage of the latter; they felt themselves capable of any sacrifice if only they could lean, rightfully, on the arm of just such a young man (despite his girth), and talk to him in low tones on the pier by moonlight.

THE policeman's arm fell. The young man, seeking in vain an opportunity to dash, did not stir. He was safe from the car behind him, which dare not run into him, and he was of course safe from the vehicle in front of him. But—in motor traffic there is and can be no " of course." The car in front of him backed instead of going forward. It was a small car and a cheap car; even the smallest and the cheapest car, however, when colliding with the human body, is very ruthless and unyielding. The girl-driver gave one " Oh ! " of surprise, and instantly corrected her mistake; but the elegant fat young man by that time was lying in the road, and in a moment crowds of people were all around him, and other people were standing up in cars to see him, and the entire traffic was once more immobilized.

The girl-driver of the deadly car blushed red, knowing that her sex was against her. If a man had depressed the wrong foot-pedal and put the car into reverse-gear, nobody would have thought twice about him. Accidents will happen. But because the offending driver was a woman, and not a beautiful woman nor a smart woman, every man in the vicinity was saying either aloud or to himself: " Ah ! These women-chauffeurs ! Why are they allowed ? " etc.

The policeman pushed through the crowd like a steam-roller, and became something between a deity and a prosecuting counsel. All the surrounding persons who had been in a hurry were no longer in a hurry, and all felt that a bit of luck had fallen their way.

The young man, white as the young woman was scarlet, had fainted for a moment, but he very quickly recovered. Clearly one of his legs was broken. A doctor magically appeared, as doctors will. The doctor said to the young man, after examining him :—

" Would you prefer to go to the town hospital or to a nursing-home ? Rather a good nursing-home."

"Would you prefer to go to the town hospital or to a nursing-home?" said the doctor. "Rather a good nursing-home."

The young man weakly nodded in favour of the nursing-home.

"I must trouble you for your name and address, sir," said the policeman, notebook in hand, after the young man had been lifted into the offending car, whose occupants, except the wicked driver, had been turned out of it.

Part of the wicked driver's punishment was that she should be compelled by the policeman to drive her victim to the nursing-home.

The victim made no reply to the policeman's respectful request. The policeman, still more respectfully, repeated his request.

"Arthur Beachcroft," answered the young man; "Piccadilly, London."

Then he shut his eyes and sighed. The doctor, sitting next to him, signalled to the policeman that his patient must be spared further inquiry for the present. The car moved forward, very gingerly. All other cars made room for it. The crowd dissipated itself, and hundreds of individuals went about proudly describing the unique accident which they had witnessed with their own eyes.

II.

"IT'S you who are the queer man to be giving a false name to the police yesterday afternoon, Mr. Purfill."

These opening words from the young and lively dark-eyed nurse as she came on duty at eight o'clock in the morning gravely disturbed the owner of the broken leg. He had passed such a night as one is liable to pass in a well-run nursing-home. The limb had been admirably set, and the nurse had done her work admirably and, in a light-hearted way, sympathetically; and the nurse had finally gone off duty, and then the patient

had become aware that a bell was installed on the landing outside his door (as a bell always is installed in a well-run nursing-home), and that this bell functioned irregularly and often. It seemed to be connected with thousands of bedrooms all of whose occupants wanted something urgently. The patient began to be hungry, and there was nothing to eat, and the blind rattled, and when he switched on the electric lamp its crude ray dazed his eyes. In the end he had the audacity to ring the bell himself, and it emphatically did ring. In twenty minutes he had made the bell ring emphatically three times. At the end of thirty minutes the night nurse entered and inquired with sympathetic and yet warning blandness :—

" Did you ring ? "

When the patient confessed hunger, the air of the night nurse indicated an exquisite and sympathetic divine discontent. She regretted that the kitchen was closed. However, she accorded biscuits, and to stop the blind from rattling she shut the window : it was ingenious of her, but drastic. Also she gave the patient aspirin, and reassured him that he could not fail to sleep. He did sleep—between five and five-thirty ; the night nurse awakened him by coming in to see how he was getting on : most kind of her. She generously brought him a cup of tea, which at an earlier period of its existence had probably been hot, but was now merely strong. When he answered her question about sleep, she said first that people always slept more than they thought they did, and second that people could scarcely expect to sleep the first night in a strange bed, especially with a leg in splints, upon which remark she went off to administer similar comfort to other patients.

SO that by seven o'clock the patient was living for one event only—the arrival of his bright, vivacious Irish nurse. These two had grown very friendly indeed during the previous afternoon and evening. The hour between seven and eight comprised some six hundred and sixty minutes. And then in bursts his old and valued friend the Irish girl with her :—

" It's you who are the queer man to be giving a false name to the police, Mr. Purfill."

Somehow she knew his real name ! Perhaps the night nurse had known it too, and the knowledge would explain the extraordinary fortitude with which the latter had borne his infelicities. No wonder that the patient was gravely disturbed ! His fractured leg became an affair of secondary importance. He felt like a criminal detected.

" Didn't I give the right name ? " he asked, with feeble cunning. " It must have been because I was dazed, then. What name did I give ? "

" It's yourself that ought to know," the smiling girl replied. " Talking so free. The policeman wrote ' Beachcroft ' in his big black beast of a book, and the matron saw it."

Mr. Purfill tried to laugh, not with complete success.

" Well," said he, " that must have been because I was in Beach Street."

" It's in Beach Street you were. But what power put it into your mouth to say your address was Piccadilly, London, seeing that you were staying at number nineteen, Channel View, here, and it's the landlady called here all in her finery because you didn't go home to the fine tea she'd cooked for you, fish and all, and she'd heard of a fine fat young man knocked down to the earth by a woman and him brought in here with a leg dangling ? "

" I do live in Piccadilly," Mr. Purfill insisted.

" You say it, and you wouldn't tell a poor girl a lie, for I judge you're quality by the smallness of your feet. But it's the policeman himself's been here this morning, as I'm telling you, but the matron pushed him out again, and the way she did it, saying you were asleep yet, and the giant said he should come again. And now it's this thermometer in my hand for your sweet mouth. Ah ! Would you suck the very mercury out of it ? "

While sucking the mercury out of the thermometer Mr. Purfill was debarred from speaking, but not from seeing. He gazed foolishly at the nurse. What he liked in her, more than her undeniable fresh comeliness, was her Irish speech—both phrase and accent. There is no ground to suppose that the Irish are less cruel, more conscientious, more benevolent, more unselfish than Anglo-Saxons, but their speech always predisposes Anglo-Saxons in their favour, and undoubtedly Mr. Purfill had taken quite a fancy to the girl of whose very name he was ignorant. He did not say to himself that the picturesqueness of her tongue was a reason for counting on her and trusting her ; but that was what it amounted to in his mind.

" I can't see any policeman to-day," he said, fretfully, as soon as she had withdrawn the thermometer.

" And you sha'n't ! " she exclaimed, examining the instrument. " It's myself that will stop him. Your temperature is the temperature of a calm and holy saint—ninety-eight point seven—but I'll write it down on the chart a hundred and two, and it's the doctor will shut the door on

any policeman, and him with his squeaking boots and his roaring great voice." She laughed lightly, and wrote on the chart and showed it to the patient.

As for Mr. Purfill, he was thunderstruck by her irresponsible audacity. To tamper with the record of a sick man's temperature! She frightened him. With nurses so fantastic and conscienceless, no patient could feel safe anywhere. And every patient was helpless. He spoke not a word. His breakfast arrived on a green lacquer tray, and on the tray a bit of paper with the name in pencil, "Mr. Purfill." It was a breakfast for a weak girl after an operation. Mr. Purfill ate it in a moment, and in another moment was hungry again. But he dared not ask for more. A maid came in to clean the room; she kept covertly and fearfully glancing at him, as at a murderer, for he had given a false name to a policeman. The matron herself came in, evidently out of curiosity to see a murderer caught and rendered innocuous by the deserved accident of a broken leg. The doctor came in. The nurse respectfully offered to him the chart, and made surreptitiously a face at Mr. Purfill, who trembled.

Surely the doctor could not fail to see through the trick of the false temperature chart. But the doctor did not blench.

"Yes, I expected it," said the doctor.

Another knock at the door, which the nurse cautiously opened a few inches.

"Mr. Purfill can see nobody to-day," said the doctor.

"It was Miss Brewer," said the nurse. "To inquire after your health. And she's brought these flowers." In her hand was a miserable bunch of cheap flowers.

"Who's Miss Brewer?" Mr. Purfill questioned, at a loss.

"Sure, and isn't it the untidy creature broke your honour's leg with the tail end of her Tin Lizzie? And did you ever see the match of it?" She held up the flowers to derision. "And it's to soften your heart not to fetch the law on her for her sinful clumsiness that she's brought them—ferns and all."

Once more Mr. Purfill tried to smile, and fell short of success.

IT was in the afternoon, while Mr. Purfill was looking at a photograph taken from a pocket-book which lay on his bed-table, that Nurse (with a capital letter in his mind now because they had been steadily growing more and more intimate) hurried in with the news that she had beaten off an inquisitive journalist—a poor local young man of the *West Sussex Weekly Courier and General Advertiser*.

"'Take yourself from this, young fellow,' said I," she said, "'or the saints themselves will not protect you from me.' He was up on the stairs. You didn't hear his impudence, and the door not latched?"

Mr. Purfill shook his head, putting away the photograph as nonchalantly and innocently as he could. Then Mr. Purfill suddenly resolved on a certain course of conduct. He would confess the truth to Nurse. To do so would give him satisfaction and would not disturb her, because she took everything for granted, even a broken leg; moreover, she showed intense interest at the slightest symptom of the emergence of a bit of personal gossip.

"It was the thought of journalists that made me give a false name to the policeman," he began.

"Then it wasn't dazed he was!"

Mr. Purfill proceeded:—

"I'll tell you what nobody else knows, except the landlady at Channel View. I came to Rustingor to get my weight down. I weighed nineteen pounds more than I ought. And I came here to hide myself while I took it off. I didn't want all my friends in London teasing me about my diet. Because, you know, I haven't to eat bread or pudding or cakes or butter or milk or ham or bacon or potatoes or sugar, and I mustn't drink alcohol at any time or drink anything at all with meals. Stiff, eh? Especially when you're asked out to dinner, eh? But I'm told if I stick to it I shall lose a stone in a month."

"You'll be losing a stone in a month if you stop here and eat every scrap they give you," Nurse put in, casually realistic.

"I'm really doing it," Mr. Purfill finished, "because my doctor says that fat men are liable to die early. And I don't feel like dying early."

"Nor look like it, either. A man with a fine paunch on him it's yourself ought to be proud of." She pointed to the hillock in the middle of the plateau of bed-clothes. "Well, it's a strange and wild story I'm hearing."

"But don't you believe me, Nurse? I assure you it's quite true."

"Oh! Is it myself that would be after disbelieving you? I can see truth in your eye. But the matron and those other wiry pagans downstairs and upstairs! Not they! Because they've made you a mysterious conspirer and criminal in their hearts, and they wouldn't be after letting you go and fade off into a mere fat young man. No! And it's the truth I'm saying to you—every syllable. But a grand romantic story it is you've told me."

"Why romantic?" Mr. Purfill demanded. "Nothing very romantic about avoirdupois!"

"What!" cried Nurse. "And will you

tell me next there isn't a woman at the bottom of it, and she likes a man slim, and you carrying her photograph about with you and all ? "

Mr. Purfill blushed in spite of every effort to remain pale. The directness of the perceptions of Irish nurses was simply terrifying. Also he was becoming rather too intimate with this particular one.

III.

THERE came a morning when one of the most romantic and thrilling episodes that ever did happen in a nursing-home happened in the nursing-home at Rustingor. Mr. Purfill would have felt the romance of it in any case, without the help of Nurse, but her chance use of the adjective " romantic " had caused him very clearly to realize, with his brain as distinguished from his heart, that the whole affair did indeed possess the true romantic quality.

Weeks had elapsed. Perhaps in ordinary circumstances Mr. Purfill would have already left the home ; but his landlady in Channel View (to whom he was steadily paying rent) had expressed a certain unwillingness to take care of a cripple, though she had been quite ready to cook meals for a man who proposed to maintain life without bread, puddings, cake, butter, milk, ham, bacon, potatoes, or sugar, and without drinking at meals. Hence he was staying on at the home. He had long ago learnt that Nurse's Christian name was Eileen, and she that his was Oswald ; but he had not allowed the intimacy to grow, nor had he ever admitted that his yearnings for slimness had any bearing on his relations with any lady.

On the morning of the episode a heavy arm-chair had been delivered at his room in the home. It resembled the ugly arm-chair of commerce, except that it had a platform for the feet, and that parallel with the right arm, and outside it, ran a steel bar along which a pendent brass weight could be moved to and fro. Nurse Eileen had remarked on the costly look of the chair, and it was a fact that Mr. Purfill had not spared expense ; but then there was no need for him to economize on his romances ; for not only had he that curse of the unambitious, a substantial private income, but he had also a sound practice at the Chancery Bar.

The last words uttered by Eileen as she quitted him that romantic morning to attend to another patient were :—

" God have mercy on your soul if you go after trying to sit in that chair this day."

He replied that he would not dream of trying to sit in the chair, either on that day or on any other day, in her absence. He was alone, free, unobserved ; he knew that Eileen would not return for at least half an hour. So he took out the photograph, which Eileen had never seen close, and gazed at it according to his daily custom.

A woman ! Odd thing for a firm-lipped, sharp-chinned Chancery lawyer to spend many minutes per day over a woman's photograph ! But such things are not quite unknown at the Bar. Christian name, Caroline (a wondrous name, he thought). Surname, Otway (famous in English literature, he thought). Age, in the immediate neighbourhood of thirty. Dark. Soft eyes. Long eyelashes. An enigmatic smile. A wedding-ring on her fine, delicate finger.

Yes, she was a widow, and not a bit a rich widow ; rather the contrary. She had a son, Alec, aged eight, who was one of Oswald Purfill's best pals and showed a semi-religious devotion to him, and was a peculiarly bright boy with a wise, tolerant, protective attitude towards his beautiful mother.

It was on an occasion when Alec had been inquiring about George IV., and Mr. Purfill had been explaining what a great, dashing fellow George IV. was, that Caroline Otway had remarked :—

" Yes, but he was fat."

This simple five-word remark, spoken in what had seemed to Mr. Purfill a disturbingly significant tone, had led the lawyer the same evening to contemplate his own figure, and to decide to alter it as quickly as possible lest it might undo him with Caroline. Then had followed the quest of professional advice, and the decision to vanish, to diet himself strictly, and to practise various exercises ingeniously calculated to modify those portions of his body whose appearance had moved Caroline to put such a disquieting emphasis on the monosyllable " fat." Then Rustingor—and the accident.

Oswald continued to gaze at the photograph of the woman who had affected him a thousand times more than any other woman had affected him in all the thirty-five years of his self-centred existence, and then his eye roved and the vision of the chair caught it and held it. Oswald became a bird and the chair became a snake ; the snake fascinated the bird. With the most singular precautions Oswald slid very slowly out of his bed, placing one foot, and only one foot, on the floor, and when a board creaked he stopped, petrified, as though fearful of being trapped by unseen detectives in the perpetration of some awful crime.

Then he moved on again, advancing without a noisy hop, by manœuvring of heel and toes of one foot, till, while still holding to the bedstead, he was within a score of inches of the chair. The other foot had not touched the floor.

At this point he happened to see himself in the mirror of the white-enamelled wardrobe. He looked earnestly and anxiously at his figure as revealed by a pyjama suit and could perceive in it no change or modification whatever. He had been dieting, he had been hungering, he had been thirsting; he had even been able, while lying on his back in bed, and without disturbing the repaired leg, to accomplish several of the—shall we say?—equatorial exercises. And yet no visible modification of his too full contours! Nothing to suggest that the hated word "fat" was no longer fairly applicable to him!

He felt distressed. Still, he was bravely determined to know the worst, and he reached the chair and fell down on it, with one leg sticking out like a warning to the unrighteous. For a few moments he dared not manipulate the sliding weight on the steel arm; he dared not glance at the steel arm. But Oswald had British grit in him; he had proved it in the war. And now he proved it again. He looked squarely at the notched steel bar; he pushed the pendent weight about until the bar balanced itself motionless and precisely horizontal. Then he faced the figures

No! His eyes must be cheating him; they had misread the figures. His heart was thumping. Good news is apt to be shattering, until it is realized. Oswald at last realized his luck. Since the last weighing, at a Turkish bath, he had diminished by eight and a half pounds. At the Turkish bath he had worn a towel; the pyjamas must weigh quite as much as the towel—probably a few ounces more. He had lost appreciably more than half a stone. Triumph! Ecstasy! Romance itself! A tremendous scene in the solitude of the sick-chamber! What a world was this world! Why hanker after Paradise when it was all around you? He saw (by faith) Caroline Otway smiling approval upon him.

"Why are you in that bath-chair, Mr. Purfill? Is it your broken leg?"

And this was by no means all. There were a few bath-chairs in Rustingor, which followed in the footsteps of Brighton at a distance of twenty-five miles. Oswald Purfill was being drawn in one of these vehicles by an aged fellow-creature the same afternoon when he met a little boy running hard in the opposite direction. The little boy halted violently at sight

of the bath-chair and shouted out to its propeller :—

"Hi! Please stop, you!"

The little boy was Alec Otway, all in blue linen. He had recognized his admired friend, and the two shook hands.

"Where were you running so fast?" asked Oswald, with a good imitation of casualness.

"I'm running after Miss Phipps," said Alec. "She left me on the sands. At least, I mean I left her. Mamma's brought me down here because I need a sun-cure. It's called heliotherapy." He remembered all the funny words uttered in his hearing. "We're staying at the Grand Hotel. We've got two rooms, and I sleep in Miss Phipps's room, but I'm going to sleep in mamma's room to-night because Miss Phipps is restless and mamma isn't, and I'm a bad sleeper for one so young. And I shall bathe to-morrow and ride on a donkey this afternoon. But I must catch up Miss Phipps, or she'll be sulky and won't give me enough jam for my tea, and perhaps she'll stop the donkey, too. Why are you in that bath-chair, Mr. Purfill? Is it your broken leg?"

"Broken leg, brother? What broken leg?"

"You broke your leg. I know you did, because I saw it in the paper, and I showed it to mamma, and it was just like a lady-driver to go and break your leg. You know I always study the press, don't you? And mamma's been wondering why you didn't tell your friends—us, for instance. She says you're fearfully secretive. Are you? Shall you come to our hotel? Mamma's lying down. She says this is the finest beach on the South Coast." Alec ceased, from breathlessness. Then he concluded: "You said once you'd teach me to fly a kite *properly*, if ever we were at the seaside together. Well, we are, and it's the finest beach on the South Coast. *I* don't think it is, but it must be. I saw it on a poster at the railway station. I say—how thin you look!"

The next moment Alec, apprehensive concerning jam and donkey, and perhaps also uncomfortably full of a really great item of news, fled away in pursuit of his nursery governess. But at intervals he turned his head and smiled and waved a hand to his friend, who was craning his neck to watch the boy. The final words of the boy's speech still sang sweetly in his ears.

IV.

IT was a new Oswald Purfill that went up to his room that day in the rumbling lift (wide enough to hold a stretcher) at the nursing-home. An Oswald drenched in romance. An Oswald, too, full of a notion at once enchanting and malicious and somewhat conceited. He had never before heard that his friend Alec suffered from any malady or constitutional defect. The boy was understood to be the incarnation of perfect health. Why, then, the need of a sun-cure? And why Rustingor for the sun-cure? Could it be——? No, absurd! Could it possibly be——? No, preposterous! But still, however absurd, however preposterous, could it conceivably be that the boy's mother had manufactured an excuse for coming to Rustingor in order to make fresh contact with Mr. Purfill? Well, it could not. And yet——! She was annoyed with him. She had even remarked to her son that he was secretive. Ah! If she knew the romantic truth! Yes, and if she did know the romantic truth she might laugh—ironically—at the foolish sentimentality of men. He would not like that.

Why had the improvident girl gone and put up at the Grand Hotel? She could not afford the Grand, which was one of those aloof and costly hotels which are generally to be found on the outskirts of popular resorts—scorning the popular resorts and arrogantly disowning connection with them. She had little sense of the value of money. What she stood in want of was a wise, protecting person to look after her, and incidentally to shower money upon her and rid her of financial care. It was monstrous that such a delicate, heavenly creature should be compelled by fate to keep accounts.

So the accident had reached the London papers, and in its correct form as regards the true name of the principal actor! And the boy himself had found it. Charming and gifted boy—naturally—being the son of so charming and gifted a mother!

It was a pity the boy had been in too much of a hurry to remember to ask for Oswald's address. Oswald knew Caroline's address, but Caroline did not know Oswald's. So that she could not call to see how he was getting on. Pooh! As if she *would* have called, in any case! When would he see her again? He desired to see her immediately, despite her annoyance, and yet he desired not to see her immediately. He would prefer that she should not set eyes on him until his obesity cure was completed. Eight and a half pounds! It was naught. (Still—"How thin you look!") He must and he would part with at least a couple of stone. He would send her some flowers. But he could not send flowers unless he bought them himself at a flower-shop, and he could not go down to a flower-shop before next day. Never could he entrust the transaction to Nurse Eileen! She would grin at

the mere mention of the sex of the recipient. She would tease him, charge him with deceiving her for weeks. His dignity could not have borne it.

The fact was, he was weary of Nurse Eileen. She was admirable and she was cheerful; but how monotonous! Being with her was like paddling along a shallow, pretty river that ran perfectly straight and unvaried for endless miles. She had no depth, no variety. He had finished with Eileen, who would doubtless behave to her next male patient exactly as she had behaved to himself.

THE next day he left the nursing-home, and the weighing machine also left the home. The landlady at Channel View had to receive him and make the best of the cripple. Not that he was a cripple for long. Within a few hours he started to walk a few steps on both legs: which placated the landlady. Nevertheless, the landlady thought him a queer fellow, and perhaps not right in the head. He was always weighing himself on his weighing machine; and when not weighing himself he was weighing his clothes and making calculations on bits of paper. His chief quality, in the estimation of the landlady, was that he ate scarcely anything, while paying a fixed inclusive price for board! He had begun by being very cheerful: but after three days he became melancholy and irritable. He was always driving out, in a horse-carriage, and each time he had to be helped in and out of the carriage. Why he had abandoned the bath-chair she could not imagine. And, indeed, how could the old woman be expected to guess that there was a lady in the case, and that it would not do for him to meet the lady while being humiliatingly drawn to and fro in a bath-chair?

For three days Oswald promenaded the edge of the sandy paradise of children; he also drove past the garden of the Grand Hotel at very frequent intervals—but never a glimpse of Caroline or Alec! Had they left Rustingor? Blank despair!

Then he saw her in the distance, hand in hand with the boy. A marvellous sunshade over her divine hat and head. The boy descried him first and scampered forward, all heels and arms, leaving his mother. Oswald stopped the carriage. The mother followed sedately.

Romance! Oswald was thrilled, but he was frightened. Romance! He was hungry and thirsty, for her sake. He had had his leg broken, for her sake; because he had gone to Rustingor in order to render himself pleasing in her sight, and if he had not gone to Rustingor he would not have had his leg broken. And he could not tell her!

She blushed as, leaning out romantically over the side of the victoria, he took her hand. The boy did nearly all the talking; his tongue would not cease—fortunately.

"It was most kind of you to send those flowers," said Caroline, gravely. "I should have written to thank you, but there was no address."

"But I told the people at the shop to pin my card on the packet!" said Oswald, relieved at the explanation of what had seemed to him to be a bodeful remissness.

"There was no card." She smiled.

"Then how did you know whom they were from?"

"Alec was sure they must be from you."

Alec! Not Caroline!

He gave his address—she did not ask for it. Soon afterwards she departed, and the boy with her. It was all very chilly. Had she noticed that he was thinner? No! The carriage rug had hidden his shape. Really, she had not said a great deal about his leg—fractured for her sake. He was disheartened, and the spectacle of the paradise of children, with its glorious smooth sand, joyous infants, castles, pier, kites, flags, minstrels, Punch-and-Judy, clowns, bathing-machines, sand-yachts, and distant dappled sea and coloured boats thereon and coloured bathers therein, the whole warmed and vitalized by the tremendous downpouring of the sun—this superb spectacle made no appeal whatever to Mr. Oswald Purfill.

V.

THE next morning all was changed for Mr. Purfill by the arrival of a letter from the Grand Hotel addressed in a handwriting with which he was not entirely unfamiliar.

"Dear Mr. Purfill,—I wonder whether you could bear to dine here on Friday at eight?—Yours sincerely, CAROLINE OTWAY."

No more than that. It might have been considered curt by the fussy. It was certainly quite unlike her usual invitations.

Oswald got out of bed and weighed himself. Two and a half pounds more gone! And it suddenly struck him, as he gazed anxiously at the mirror, that his cheeks were noticeably thinner. The old cherubic look was going—or gone.

"Of course," thought Oswald, as if he had made a sudden and startling discovery, "she's a woman. They're always changeable. I used to imagine that she was an exception, but she isn't. Yesterday she was stiff because she wanted to make out that she had a grievance against me, so that I shouldn't suspect that she really only came

to Rustingor to see me. Then after I left her she was afraid she'd been *too* stiff. Three days to Friday. Why didn't she ask me for to-night? What about the next three days? Well, now she wants to demonstrate that she isn't in the least hurry to see me."

His mind returned to the singular brevity, even brusqueness, of the invitation.

"Dash the girl!" he exclaimed aloud, and sat down at once in the parlour adjoining the bedroom, and wrote :—

"Dear Mrs. Otway,—So many thanks for Friday at eight. I could.—Yours sincerely, O. PURFILL."

"That'll teach her," he said to himself.

With all this he was intensely uplifted and happy. It is a fact that he sang aloud, and ate less and less, and did more and more physical exercises, and made a rule against weighing himself more than twice a day.

In the three days he had no sight of either Alec or Alec's mother. His state of happiness fell somewhat. Still, there were two advantages: his leg was getting stronger and his weight was diminishing.

ON the evening of the third day, which came at last, though Oswald had feared that it never would come, he arrayed himself with special care and walked out to his carriage unaided. He was early, despite a determination not to be early, and therefore he instructed the coachman to go slowly. The coachman went very slowly. It was just his luck, he thought, that he should encounter Nurse Eileen, who was taking a night off. Eileen negligently signalled to the coachman to stop. She noticed Oswald's attire, smiled peculiarly, and said :—

"So it's yourself that's going to meet her this evening in the half-light."

Unparalleled effrontery! But nurses always knew you too well. They mowed down your dignified reserves as with a scythe. This was the last time he ever saw Nurse Eileen. In three months he could scarcely recall what she looked like.

Caroline Otway stood in the foyer of the hotel when Oswald entered. She was looking at a poster. Others were there, but they were candles to a dazzling headlight. Tall! Slim! Dark smooth hair, large and rather melancholy, dreaming eyes, and a wonderful olive complexion! Some powder, but no rouge. A dark, discreet frock. Long fingers! And the pose of her body! Thrilling! And she knew it. They shook hands without a word. She blushed.

"And Alec?" Oswald questioned, after a few ceremonious politenesses.

"Oh, Alec's in bed. He doesn't stay up for dinner. We shall be alone. Do you mind?"

She had secured a table in a corner.

"No soup," said Oswald to the waiter.

Caroline offered no comment.

"Now as regards drink?" the hostess asked.

"Thanks. I don't drink anything at meals," said Oswald, and continued upon the subject, which she had introduced, of nursing-homes.

"No, thanks," said Oswald, when the waiter presented an omelette. (Naturally at the seaside fish was unobtainable.) "Flour in it," he added to Caroline, who said nothing.

"No potatoes, thanks," said Oswald to the waiter, at the meat course. "No, no sauce."

"No, thanks," said Oswald, when the waiter presented trifle, at the sweet course.

"No sugar. No milk," said Oswald, faced with a coffee cup.

"I'm afraid you've had a very poor dinner," said the hostess.

"On the contrary, I've had an excellent dinner."

"Have you lost your old appetite, or only mislaid it for to-night?" she quizzed.

"I've thrown it away. I'm dieting! I'm getting my weight down. Nearly a stone already. Don't you notice my face?"

"I thought it looked pinched. Worry, I thought."

"Not at all. Hard work and iron resolve."

The music began, and they went to sit in the lounge.

"But why all this dieting?" Caroline demanded suddenly.

"Because George the Fourth was so *fat*," said Oswald.

"I don't quite follow," she murmured.

"Yes, you do," Oswald firmly contradicted.

She would not meet his glance.

"Surely," she murmured, "one can state a fact about an historical character without being misunderstood!"

"No, one can't," said Oswald.

She looked up timidly at him, and her olive-tinted face with its wistful eyes melted into a smile.

"It's all very romantic, I think," she murmured.

"That's just what it *is!*" said Oswald. "And I'm glad you think so."

And he was overcome with the romance of it, and she too. Oswald was overwhelmed with the romance of his own resolve to continue in the most ascetic well-doing until —well, you know how flat the front of a house can be. And Caroline was over-

Caroline stood in the foyer of the hotel when Oswald entered.
"We shall be alone," she said. "Do you mind?"

whelmed by the romance of the thought of what Oswald had done and was doing to satisfy her caprices. Romance was so strong upon them that they could hardly talk sense any more.

"A STEPFATHER," said Alec to Miss Phipps a day or two later, "is the man who is your mother's husband when he isn't your father." As usual, Alec had got it right.

"How My Plots Come To Me"

PART I.

By

ARNOLD BENNETT
H. A. VACHELL
W. J. LOCKE
ANTHONY HOPE
E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM
J. J. BELL
MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES
J. S. FLETCHER

In the preface to "The Old Wives' Tale" Mr. Arnold Bennett has described how the idea of writing that book came to him one night in a restaurant in Paris, and in his book of reminiscences Mr. H. A. Vachell has done the same thing regarding "Quinney's." The following quotations were sent to a number of other eminent authors, whom we asked to give their own experiences on similar lines.

How I came to write "The Old Wives' Tale." By ARNOLD BENNETT.

IN the autumn of 1903 I used to dine frequently in a restaurant in the Rue de Clichy, Paris. . . . One night an old woman came into the restaurant to dine. She was fat, shapeless, ugly, and grotesque. She had a ridiculous voice and ridiculous gestures. It was easy to see that she lived alone, and that in the long lapse of years she had developed the kind of peculiarity which induces guffaws among the thoughtless. She was burdened with a lot of small parcels, which she kept dropping. She chose one seat; and then, not liking it, chose another; and then another. In a few moments she had the whole restaurant laughing at her. . . . I reflected concerning the grotesque diner: "This woman was once young, slim, perhaps beautiful; certainly free from these ridiculous mannerisms. Very probably she is unconscious of her singularities. Her case is a tragedy. One ought to be able to make a heartening novel out of the history of a woman such as she." Every stout, ageing woman is not grotesque—far from it—but there is an extreme pathos in the mere fact that every stout, ageing woman was once a young girl with the unique charm of youth in her form and movements and in her mind. And the fact that the change from the young girl to the stout, ageing woman is made up of an infinite number of infinitesimal changes, each unperceived by her, only intensifies the pathos.

It was at this instant that I was visited by the idea of writing the book which ultimately became "The Old Wives' Tale." Of course, I felt that the woman who caused the ignoble mirth in the restaurant would not serve me as a type of heroine. For she was much too old and obviously unsympathetic. It is an absolute rule that the principal character of a novel must not be unsympathetic, and the whole modern tendency of realistic fiction is against oddness in a prominent figure. I knew that I must choose the sort of woman who would pass unnoticed in a crowd. . . .

"One night," says Mr. Arnold Bennett, "an old woman came into the restaurant to dine. She was fat, shapeless, ugly, and grotesque, and was burdened with a lot of small parcels which she kept dropping."

H. A. VACHELL on the origin of "Quinney's."

I AM so often asked about "Quinney's," both book and play, that I will set down the truth, which has its humours. I used to buy furniture and porcelain, when I could afford it, from Thomas Rohan, who at that time did business in Southampton under the name of Thomas Rudd. He showed me one day a lovely lacquer cabinet, but the price was prohibitive. How I coveted that cabinet! Finally, it occurred to me that I might justifiably buy it if I could write a short story about it. I wrote "The Lacquer Cabinet" and sold it for seventy-five pounds. This was the price of the cabinet. The matter would have ended there had it not been for Mr. Rohan. He happened to be not only an expert, but an enthusiast. Whether or not he suggested that I should write a novel about a dealer in antiques I can't say. Certainly, he told me anecdotes about the tricks of the trade that captivated my fancy. . . .

W. J. LOCKE.

HOW and why stories dawn from a writer's subconsciousness and gradually take shape, and how the characters in them manage, in his mind, to become human entities, more real to him than hundreds of his casual acquaintances, is a mystery which I have always been too lazy to try to solve. In the germinating stages sometimes the characters grow out of the story; sometimes the story grows out of the characters.

If you're a novelist you've got that kind of kink in your brain; if you haven't, you

can't be a novelist. And, as I say, being a lazy man, I'm content to leave it at that.

But there is one novel of mine—"The Rough Road"—which had a peculiarly definite genesis. To describe it I must be somewhat autobiographical and even domestic.

There was an evening after dinner during the middle of the war, and my wife and I were alone in our drawing-room in Hertfordshire. We talked, as most people talked in those days, about depressing things in Picardy and Flanders. The conversation dropped, and I remember moving drearily about the room, until my wife's voice suddenly arrested me.

"Aren't you ever going to do any work again?"

I knew what she meant. She was not upbraiding me for sloth. Like every other writer, I was continually engaged on that queer sort of stuff known as propaganda. She meant my own work. As far as that went, I had been idle for months. I turned. At that time my wife was a bit of an invalid, and was resting against a heap of gaudy cushions on a divan. I said:—

"No, my dear. I've finished. The war has knocked every lingering bit of stuffing out of me. Who cares in these days whether John marries Mary, which is the essence of every story in the world? I've shot my last bolt."

And, after the way of human husbands, I proceeded to prove how utterly impossible it was for me ever to think of writing another novel.

Now, those of you who are novelists' wives will appreciate the smile of affectionate derision that proclaimed her scepticism. I'm afraid she had heard this tale of barren founts before. The old wolf business. But this time it was a real wolf. I told her so. She paid no attention to me, but picked up a Pekingese, the Master of the Household, who lay slumbering by her side, and stood him up on her lap.

"Darling," said she, in the idiotic way in which women (and also men, *moi qui parle* among them) address Pekingese, "why doesn't Father write a nice little story about you?"

I looked at her for a moment or two in a daze, and then I cried:—

"By God! I will. I'll write a book about a boy brought up like that dam' dog, and pitchforked into the hell of the war."

And I went straight into my library and roughed out a kind of story. And that's why the hero of "The Rough Road" had the name of Doggie.

The rest of the history of "The Rough Road" may or may not be of interest. I took great pains over it. I had visited the Front and seen odds and ends of astonishing things for myself. . . . I paid a fee to a very gallant soldier and fine poet, home in hospital, to correct technical errors. He was killed six weeks after returning the marked MS. . . . I only used one actual episode told me, before I started the book, by a friend who was acting as interpreter. This was the account of a Tommy who fell into the trenches of a regiment a long way off from his own, and on being examined was found to have his pockets crammed with loot—French securities, bank-notes, and jewellery. He told a remarkable story. He had been billeted some way back a week or two before, and the girl of the house had told him that all the family fortunes had been lowered by a rope into a dry well on a farm not far off. Discovering that this devastated farm was on No Man's Land, immediately opposite his trenches, he thought he might just as well have a try to creep out at night and get the poor girl her family fortune. Oh, no, said he, he wasn't in love with the girl. He only thought it hard luck on her, and there was the remains of the farm in front of him. So he had crawled on his belly and got the stuff and crawled back; only he had missed his direction. My friend, the interpreter, was sent to the billet and came back with the tidings that the man's story was perfectly true. What happened to him, God knows.

Well, the episode suggested Jeanne, the French heroine of the novel, for love of whom Doggie crept out to the well and got wounded, and fell into a strange trench.

When the novel was published, I was longing for a superior reviewer to denounce this episode—the only non-imagined incident of the book—as one of my lapses into absurd sentimentalism. But nobody questioned it; whereby I suffered one of the greatest disappointments of my life.

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM.

EVERY writer of fiction is, I imagine, continually asked the same question: "Do you take your characters from real life?" Of course we don't. What a lot of puppets we should create if ever we attempted it! On the other hand, a lay figure, a stereotyped incident, often gives us just the idea we have been wanting for a story.

For instance, many years ago I lived for over a year in the Savoy Court. I lunched at least four days a week in the Grill Room, and became immensely interested in two elderly gentlemen who always

"Just look in here Mr. Oppenheim," said the steward. "If you ask me, I believe he'd got an idea he'd never come back."

occupied the same table close to mine. They possessed an air of rubicund simplicity eloquently reminiscent of Dickens. They were dressed in the same old-fashioned style, they had the same healthy complexions, they ate the same food each day, they frequently quarrelled during the meal, and made up by shaking hands before they left the table. They were treated with the utmost respect by the waiters and the vestiaire, they always left the place together, and, when they did so, they climbed into the most old-fashioned carriage I have ever seen, and were driven away—still together. I purposely refrained from asking a single question about them, and, with greater facility than I have ever written a story before or since, I wrote "The Inevitable Millionaires." From first to last they seemed to me the most delightful types of provincial bumpkins, determined to see a little of life. As soon as the book was finished, I made inquiries concerning them. I discovered that they were diamond merchants in Hatton Garden, particularly noted for their shrewdness and business capacity. My book was finished, however, so I didn't mind.

An incident which always appealed to me as being peculiarly dramatic in its possibilities gave me the whole idea for the first of my latest series of short stories. I travelled home last year from the Riviera by a P. and O. boat from Marseilles. Having established myself in good time, I was leaning over the rail, watching the last few passengers arrive, when I noticed a steward standing close by, evidently in a very disturbed frame of mind. He watched eagerly every arriving passenger, twice he left the side of the ship to speak to officers, and he was obviously greatly upset when at last the gangway was lowered and we edged away

from the dock. He remained on deck for some time afterwards, and only went below when he was fetched by a fellow-steward. Later on he brought me my hot water, and I questioned him.

"It was one of my gentlemen, sir," he confided. "He has missed the boat."

"You mean that he never arrived?" I asked.

The man shook his head.

"He travelled with us from Bombay, sir," he said, "and a queer sort he was. They say that he'd been a missionary or something—used to talk a lot to himself, and wandered about the top deck at night. He'd never left the boat since we started, and never changed for the evening, although he was most particular about his baths and linen. All of a sudden, in Marseilles Harbour, after we'd been there for the best part of a day, he strode down into his state-room, dragged out a bag he hadn't opened, put on some old-fashioned evening clothes, asked me for his overcoat, stick, and hat, and off he went. 'I'm going to see what Marseilles is like, John,' he said, kind of funny like. 'You be careful, sir,' I said to him. 'It's a queer sort of place—and don't you forget we sail punctually at twelve o'clock to-morrow morning.' He just smiled at me, and off he went. I can't tell you why, sir, but I knew he wasn't coming back. Just look in here."

He unlocked the door of the next state-room. A man's clothes were thrown about in the wildest confusion, drawers had been left open, an empty pocket-book lay discarded upon the table.

"If you ask me," the man concluded, "I believe he'd got an idea he'd never come back."

Well, nothing was heard of that passenger, or, to the best of my knowledge, has been heard to this day, but when the steward described him to me I knew very well that I'd seen him the night before, at one of the seven "tavernes" which figure in the night life of Marseilles, and my story flamed out before my eyes. I sat on deck and wrote it in two days.

J. J. BELL.

THE little whaling-steamer *Ornulf* had been out for ten days, and, what with fog, followed by dirty weather, had done badly at her trade. We had cruised around and around St. Kilda, down below Barra Head, out west to Rockall, and away north, a hundred and thirty miles beyon l the Butt of Lewis. There, at last, in a heavy sea, the gunner had shot a couple of whales, but, the gale increasing, had decided to make for the whaling-station in West Loch Tarbert, Harris. With the weighty carcasses astern and the wind abeam, in lashing rain we made weary, dreary work of it; wet work, too, in the salt-water sense, scuppers-under all the time. No unflooded spot on board, excepting below, which would have been too dull a place, even for a suffering landsman, and in the box of a bridge, where the gunner and I, behind the "dodger," passed our waking hours in talking "whale"—whale, whale, and nothing but whale. I have mentioned all those circumstances by way of indicating the occupation of my mind just then, and of impressing the fact that I was not on the look-out for an idea for a story of non-seafaring adventure, romance, villainy, tragedy, and love.

Towards ten o'clock on that July night we began to roll from the open Atlantic towards the mouth of West Loch Tarbert, steaming warily among the skerries and sunken reefs, which showed like the flanks and backs of sea monsters above the surge that heaved and noised about them.

"Gasgeir!" interpolated the gunner, with a swing of his hand, and went on with his whale talk.

I glanced carelessly and saw, looming through the streaming dusk, a rocky islet, about half a mile long, with something grim and infinitely lonely about it, which, as I had chanced earlier to hear, was uninhabited and, because of the heavy swell, very seldom visited by human beings. But in that moment it seemed to me to have people on it—an elderly man, his daughter, a house-keeper, a man-servant—living in a white timber house of Norwegian pattern, electric-lighted and furnished luxuriously. The elderly man was a scientist, with an invention for extracting the gold from sea-water. But no! The extraction process was only a "blind," to deceive his daughter and any strangers who might come to the island. The man was really a forger of foreign bonds and bank-notes, carrying out his nefarious fortune-making on that remote fragment of land, safe from observation and suspicion—until a young man in his motor-boat, caught in a storm, the engine failing, was cast ashore on a black night and—— The name of the book would be "Atlantic Gold."

So came the idea, title and all, like a flash out of the dusk, from that desolate little island, in an hour when my mind was filled with thoughts of another tune altogether. Not, perhaps, a particularly good or bright idea, yet worth mentioning, I hope, because of the odd manner of its coming. Someone may imagine that I

"So came the idea," says Mr. J. J. Bell, "of 'Atlantic Gold,' title and all, like a flash out of the dusk, from that desolate little island."

lost no time in putting it to paper, but, as a matter of fact, four years passed before I began the novel, which was published in 1917. I may add that in 1920 I had the luck to get landed on the island, and found that I had described it pretty accurately in my story.

MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES.

IN the course of general conversation, at a dinner-party at which I happened to be present, a gentleman observed that he had once known an old couple who were firmly convinced that the mysterious murderer known as Jack the Ripper had once spent a night in their lodging-house.

The thought drifted into my mind that this old couple's experience should make a remarkable short story. But a considerable time elapsed—I think quite a year—before I actually wrote a short story on that theme. It appeared in what was, I think, the last number of a pre-war magazine.

Now when I write a short story I always know everything that has happened to my characters, both before the story began and after the story ended. So, when I was commissioned to write a serial for *The Daily Telegraph*, my mind turned to what seemed to me to contain the kernel of a dramatic study of suspense and fear, and I wrote another version of the same story, now known as "The Lodger."

While it was running as a serial I received a great many very touching letters from people who kept lodgings. But the letter which pleased me most was that from an old man-servant who said that he found it difficult to believe that I hadn't been myself, at some time of my life, a butler!

On publication in book form, "The Lodger" was not favourably received by the critics. But it has been translated into many languages; was made into a play, which had quite a successful run; is constantly mentioned both in English and foreign books dealing with real and imaginary crime; and is now being shown as a film in England and in America.

ANTHONY HOPE.

IN the case of the great majority of my books I am unable to assign any definite origin to the central idea; it seems just to have "come into my head." Some character or situation suggested itself as interesting to treat, and round this central point the book was, by reflection and experimental beginnings, gradually built up. There was no conscious receiving of a definite suggestion from an outside source.

But there are two exceptions—two instances in which I can definitely refer the first germ of the book to a conversation. In one case no suggestion was meant,

though what was said carried one for my mind; in the other a direct suggestion was made, and was accepted consciously by me, though it was ultimately carried out in a very much modified form.

Many years ago I was staying in the same country house with Mr. Henry Chaplin (the late Lord Chaplin), and one evening, after dinner, he struck, to my great interest and delight, a vein of political reminiscence, and talked of the eminent politicians and statesmen whom he had seen and known. Presently the great figure of Disraeli came into the conversation, and Mr. Chaplin laid especial stress on the value to Disraeli of the support and "backing" which he had received from the brothers Lord George and Lord Henry Bentinck. (As regards Lord George, at least, what Mr. Chaplin said seems to be amply confirmed by "The Life of Disraeli," by Monypenny and Buckle.) This suggested to me both a situation and a central character—a young, obscure, struggling man of genius on the one side, and, on the other, two influential aristocrats struck by his gifts, and determined that they should not be lost to the political party to which all three belonged.

This is the situation with which my book "Quisanté" opens, the brothers Lord Richard and Lord James Benyon representing the Bentincks, and Quisanté taking the place of Disraeli. I say "taking the place of," not being or representing, Disraeli, because for the purposes of the story as it developed, and especially in regard to the relations between Quisanté and his wife, I gave to Quisanté moral faults, and even a certain vulgarity, which it was very far from my intention to attribute to Lord Beaconsfield. Still, with and in spite of all changes and modifications, the Disraeli-Bentinck situation was the original germ from which my story grew.

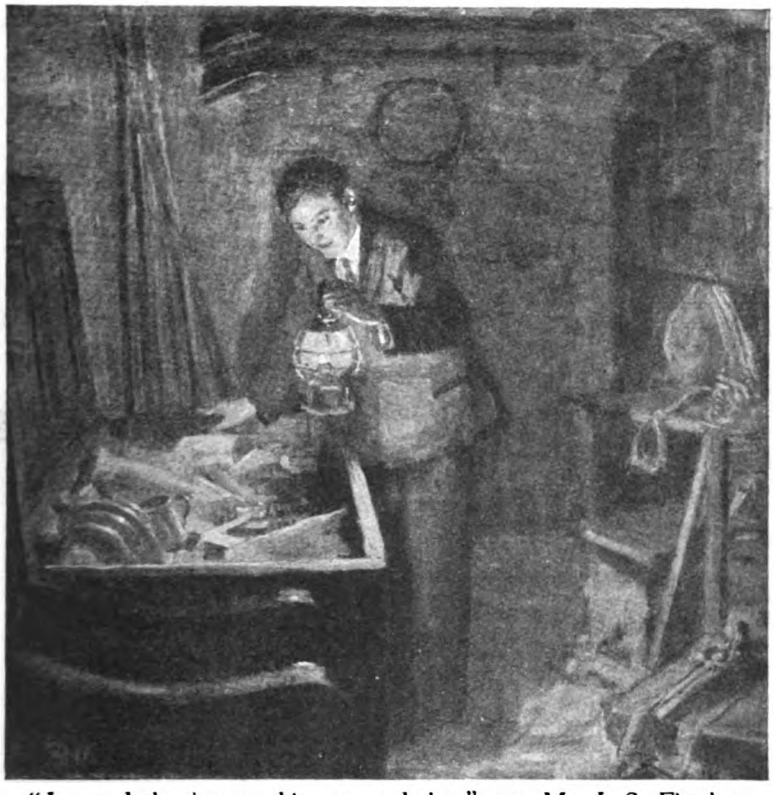
In the case of the second book, "The Great Miss Driver," I can trace back its origin to a conversation with no less distinctness. The late Bishop of London, Dr. Mandell Creighton, was very kind to me, and often used to talk to me at the Athenæum. Among his historical enthusiasms—and he was, of course, no less eminent as an historian than as a churchman—was Queen Elizabeth. He was keenly interested in the great Queen's subtle and tortuous character, and, as will be remembered, wrote a study of her. One day he did me the honour—coming from him it was an honour—of suggesting that I should write a novel about her—not of the slap-dash, historical "good Queen Bess" order, but a psychological study, with an effort to get at the real woman and draw her as she was. Somewhat appalled at the task suggested to me, I yet had the audacity to entertain the project for some time, and I even made preliminary investigations. But I was soon driven to the conclusion that the difficulties were too great for me; I had not the historical learning, and it would have cost me years to acquire it. But, all the same, Queen Elizabeth would not quite leave me alone, however much I recoiled from her.

At last an alternative struck me. I could not do the great Queen of history as she was, but I might achieve a modern and miniature copy of her. I set the lady in our own times; I reduced her realm from a kingdom to a great business which she had inherited. But I tried to keep the essentials of her—her masterfulness, her self-reliance, her subtle cunning, above all (it was the trait that had especially captivated Dr. Creighton) the way in which, while hating to surrender her power or her independence to any man, she yet used without scruple a woman's attraction and a woman's wiles to gain her ends. In so far as I succeeded in my efforts—and the success is, I fear, only partial—Jenny Driver is Queen Elizabeth "limited and reduced," and the germ of her was my conversation with Dr. Creighton, just as the germ of Quisanté lies in what Mr. Chaplin said about Disraeli and the Bentincks. But, while in the case of Disraeli I took little more than the situation, with Queen Elizabeth I took as much of the character as I could understand and manage.

J. S. FLETCHER.

I SPENT much of my boyhood under the care of a grandmother whose house, set in the midst of an old-world village, was of sufficient antiquity to form a perpetual source of interest to an imaginative, inquisitive youngster. There were all sorts of nooks and corners in it, from the deep, vaulted cellars to the dark places under the high roof; from my recollection of it I should say the house had been built at least three hundred years; some of it, perhaps, still longer. There was one part which, to me, was an object of ceaseless curiosity. A narrow, winding stair gave access to a chamber in which the odds and ends of several generations had accumulated—old furniture, old books, old guns, and the like. In its further wall was a door, a solid, forbidding affair of oak, studded with square-headed nails. And that door was locked, always locked—and my grandmother had the key.

I forget how long it was before I coaxed that key out of my grandmother's hands. I should say I began teasing her for it when I was about nine years old, and got



"I turned the lantern this way and that," says Mr. J. S. Fletcher, "and finally concentrated its light on a great oak chest."

possession of it some years later. But, by persistent endeavour, I got it—and when she handed it over, one dark winter afternoon, she told me that no one had entered that room for years, many years. But the key worked in the lock, with a good deal of creaking and groaning, and I stepped, full of awe, into the darkness, carrying a lantern, and looked around me. There was no window in the place, but high in one wall was an opening, crossed over by rusty iron bars—hence, the atmosphere was fairly fresh. Still, there was the undefinable odour of the past; it was as though one had suddenly stepped out of the nineteenth into the sixteenth century.

But what was there in this hitherto secret room? The raftered roof hung thick with cobwebs; the flooring had an equally thick carpeting of dust; the walls showed great patches of green mould. There were Things there, however. In one corner stood a bundle of pikes; in another a collection of old muskets; on a table lay a fine saddle, afterwards discovered to be of red Spanish leather, silver-mounted; on the walls hung more horse-trappings. And there were swords there, and pistols, and what not of that sort of thing, and the rust had done its work on them. All this I saw as I turned the lantern this way and that. Finally, I concentrated its light on a great oak chest, elaborately carved and panelled, which stood against the further wall. The lid was heavy and hard to move; when at last I forced it open I found inside the chest things that had been flung into it anyhow: old pewter, old needlework, old books, and a mass of papers. Later, amongst those papers, I discovered a manuscript account of the sieges of Pontefract Castle, evidently written by an eye-witness. That old document, time-worn and disreputable, but still legible enough, prompted me, not so many years afterwards, to write my earliest story, "When Charles the First was King"—one of the last of the old three-volume novels, and after thirty years still on the market, not only in its original English, but in several other languages.

Further contributors will include W. B. Maxwell, "Sapper," Gilbert Frankau, Denis Mackail, W. W. Jacobs, F. Britten Austin, E. Temple Thurston, H. de Vere Stacpoole, Max Pemberton, Sheila Kaye-Smith, etc.

Mrs. Axminster's Butler

By

DENIS MACKAIL

Illustrated by
STANLEY LLOYD

ONE reads a lot of stuff nowadays about the breaking up of big estates, and the turning of big houses into hotels, and the disappearance of the old order of things under the crushing load of taxation.

One also gathers, from a casual inspection of the comporary Press, that the only people who have any money ft to-day are the Americans and the unemployed; that the le rich have all become the hard-working poor; that everyone ho used to live in the country now lives in London; and that

Observe Mr. Ibbetts, whose dignified progress with a decanter of port adds such a touch of calm correctness to the meet.

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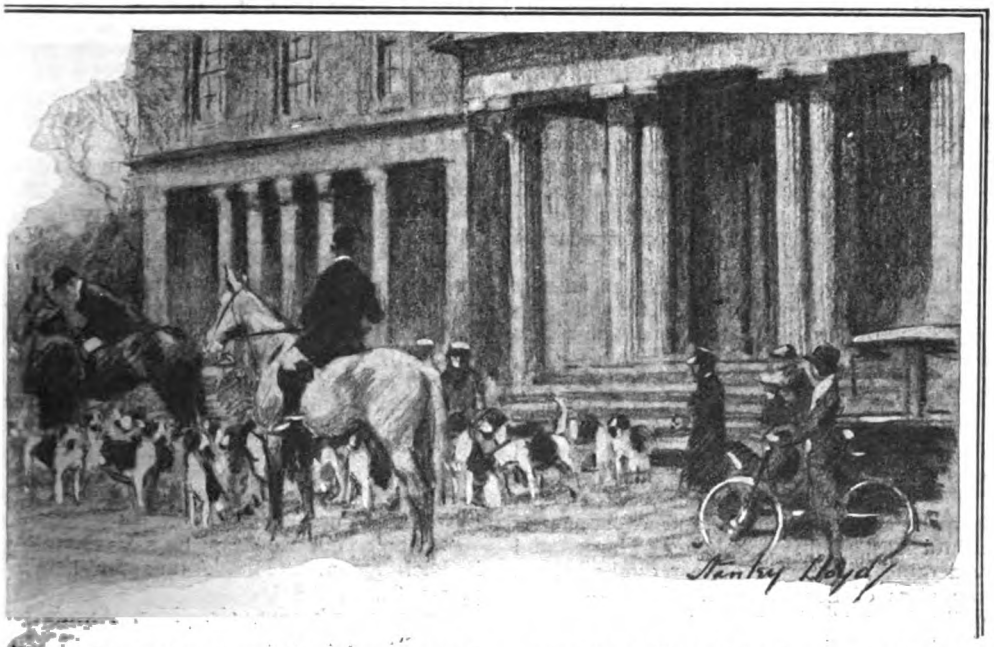


they might just as well have stayed where they were, seeing that steel houses, broadcasting, and arterial roads have reduced our native land to one vast, monotonous level, inhabited by a debt-ridden population who are waiting in dull apathy for complete extermination in the next war.

Well, well; that, of course, is one way of looking at it all, and a very jolly sort of way it is, too. It braces us. Its acceptance marks us off from our happy-go-lucky ancestors, who blundered along anyhow, and defeated the Spanish Armada without coughing up a hundred thousand pounds a day for the next three generations to anybody whatsoever. It's a price that we cheerfully pay for progress, and with all respect to the Daylight Saving Act, nobody can put back the clock.

On the other hand, one can't help observing that there are tracts of country and strata of society where this general decline and fall of the British Empire seem to have escaped unnoticed. In all directions one is quite liable to come on a pack of hounds in full, or partial, cry. Such hounds will be followed by a cavalcade of other ladies and gentlemen in expensive clothes, and on expensive horses, whilst a fleet of expensive motor-cars bearing older but equally expensively-dressed passengers will be seen dodging and dashing along the lanes and by-ways in a feverish effort to be in at the death. Evidence of the crushing load of taxation seems to be completely lacking; and though economists will explain desperately that the whole hunt is careering along on its capital, there is nothing whatever to show it.

No; in the hunting counties—and particularly in Bassetshire, where the scene of this narrative is laid—there are still big estates, and big houses, and big incomes. And though the inhabitants show the most sublime indifference to the contemporary Press—in so far as it declares that the whole country is on the brink of ruin—Nemesis seems powerless to bring them to their senses. Occasionally they fall off their horses and break their necks, but their net personalties continue to be proved for enormous figures; and there are always plenty of people to buy up their houses and stables and to go on shouting "Tally-ho!"

The whole situation is very puzzling to the outsider, who is already sufficiently bewildered by finding himself in a hunting county at all. Are these people, he asks, as immune from the natural laws of finance as they are clearly devoid of reason in their devotion to this extraordinary sport? He asks, but he hears no answer. And since—we confess it frankly—we are wholly unable to solve the mystery either, we must just accept the position as it undoubtedly exists.

Whether the people in Bassetshire are rich because they hunt, or hunt because they are rich, we have absolutely no ghost of a notion. We just fling them on to our canvas as we find them; a luxurious, enigmatic background to the simple story of Mrs. Axminster's butler.

LONG after Mrs. Axminster had become too fat to be hoisted into the saddle, and too heavy to be supported—if they could have got her there—by anything short of a Suffolk Punch, she had continued to follow the North, South, and West Bassetshire packs from a series of enormously powerful cars. And long after increasing years and size and infirmity had cut her off from even this form of sport, the North, South, and West Bassetshire packs went on meeting at her hideous house.

While the hounds rolled about in her flower-beds, and the horses danced nervously about on her lawns, and the riders snatched hurriedly at the sandwiches, slices of cake, and cherry brandy which her brave servants risked their lives to offer them; and while the huntsmen cracked their whips, and the masters scowled and swore at pedestrians and bicyclists, and the air was filled with yelping, whinnying, horn-blowing, munching, and exchange of salutations, Mrs. Axminster's large and venerable face would appear dimly behind the glass of her bedroom window—gazing dully down at the scene which had been enacted here, with only trifling changes of detail, for hundreds of past years.

The gentlemen riders, looking up at her, would raise the top-hats into which so many of them would subsequently fall, and the lady riders would wave their little hunting-crops, and Mrs. Axminster's vast head would nod remote acknowledgments as she dreamed, perhaps, of the days when a little girl on a shaggy pony had taken part in a similar pageant away back in the middle of last century.

However, don't let's get sentimental about Mrs. Axminster. If she had grown old, then this is no more than must happen to most of us. If she had grown fat, then it was but the natural payment for lifelong greed. She could still count her blessings if she chose; her hideous house, her big garden and park, her very considerable income, her undisputed authority over an entire village, and her faithful retinue of devoted servants.

Observe, for instance, Mr. Ibbetts, that sleek, quiet, and gentlemanly figure in the striped trousers and black tail-coat, whose dignified progress with glasses and a decanter of port-wine adds such a touch of calm correctness to the noise and flurry of this morning's meet. Horses which a moment before were attempting to lash out at each other with their hind legs, or to deposit their riders in Mrs. Axminster's holly-bushes, suddenly control themselves as Mr. Ibbetts draws near. Hounds which had been yelling at the tops of their voices as suddenly sink into silence. The pedestrians and bicyclists edge a little farther away down the drive. Even the breeze which had been playing so sportively with the dead leaves on Mrs. Axminster's front lawn seems to die away with an air of apology, as Ibbetts's slow tread is heard on the gravel sweep.

"Good morning, my lord. I'm glad to see you looking so well, my lord. Will you have a glass of port-wine, my lord? Thank you, my lord."

The incomparable Ibbetts gently inclines his sleek head, and passes on again.

"Good morning, sir. I hope you'll have a good run to-day, sir. The conditions are excellent, I should judge, sir. A glass of port-wine, sir? Thank you, sir."

Colonel Weatherspoon, Master of the North Bassetshire, accepts and drains the glass which in this extraordinary county is considered a suitable postscript to a colossal breakfast, and an admirable preface to the business of pursuing the fox.

"Thank you, Ibbetts," he says, handing it back again. "Mrs. Axminster keepin' pretty fit, what?"

"Yes, thank you, sir. Mrs. Axminster keeps wonderfully well."

"Ha!" says Colonel Weatherspoon. "Capital! Heh?"

He is turning his gnarled face up for another glance at that first-floor window, when he suddenly observes a bicyclist trying to pat one of the hounds. In the twinkling of an eye the gnarled face becomes the colour of a ripe tomato.

"Hi, there, you! What are you doin', sir? Heh?"

The bicyclist's face turns the colour of an over-ripe beetroot, and he backs hastily into a holly-bush.

"Be careful, sir!" roars the Master, with his veins swelling. "Or, by——"

Somebody cracks a whip, and the wretched bicyclist nearly jumps out of his skin. You gather, we hope, that there is no slackness about the traditions of the North Bassetshire. If Colonel Weatherspoon had treated his men in the Army as twice every week he treats the followers of this expensive pack—and as on the remaining four days they are treated by the Masters of the South and West Bassetshire—it seems difficult to see how he could have avoided an accidental bullet in the back. But the Army is one thing and the hunting-field is another; and all Bassetshire knows in which of them rigid, brutal, hectoring discipline is the more important.

It is a fact that Colonel Weatherspoon is one of the most popular men in the county.

Meanwhile the incomparable Ibbetts continues on his round of hospitality and

refreshment. And as we watch him it comes gradually to our notice that two members of this historical hunt are watching him also; closely, attentively, and, in spite of the difference of their sex, with exactly the same cautious yet determined expression.

The big, red-faced, blue-eyed man of about forty-five on the chestnut, and the big, red-faced, blue-eyed woman of about thirty-seven on the roan have neither of them ever cultivated any particular development of the intellect. Subject to foot-and-mouth disease—which, like the rest of the county, they are convinced is in some way attributable to their political opponents—they both turn out six days every week with the three Bassetshire hunts, and subside into a kind of inverted hibernation when the unwanted but inevitable summer comes round. Any process of thought, unless directly associated with fox-hunting, is as foreign to their simple natures as to the old mounting-block outside Mrs. Axminster's front door. They hunt, they eat and drink, they read of their exploits in the pages of the *Bassetshire Herald*, they sleep, and they hunt again. To outsiders such as ourselves, they, and those like them, must for ever remain an object of awed and speculative wonder.

Having said this much of them, with accuracy and, we hope, without malice, it may sound contradictory to state that an idea—and the same idea—was at this moment present behind both their red-faced, blue-eyed countenances. Let us explain, therefore, that this idea had been evolving itself, slowly, hesitatingly, and with many pauses, for the best part of two seasons; and that even to-day it was hardly in shape to be set forth in their extremely limited vocabulary.

Nevertheless, this germ continued to grow. As they looked at the incomparable Ibbetts, it occurred to them again that Mrs. Axminster was now nearly ninety, that in the natural course of events she must before long pass on to another sphere of existence, and that there would then become available for employment elsewhere the most admirable butler in the whole of Bassetshire.

Never, while Mrs. Axminster still loomed behind that first-floor window, would either Aubrey Laking or Violet Pardoe tempt the incomparable Ibbetts from his duties and responsibilities at the hideous house. But if and when Mrs. Axminster did go the way of all flesh, well, then——

Again they stared ruminatively at the incomparable Ibbetts, each of them in his or her somewhat obscure mind's eye seeing a vision of that sleek, quiet, and gentlemanly figure handing round refreshments on his or her own front lawn. Mr. Laking sucked in his cheeks, and gently smote his left riding-boot with the end of his crop. Miss Pardoe pursed up her lips, and slowly changed the grip on her reins.

Then, as the incomparable Ibbetts passed silently between them, their eyes suddenly met over the top of his dark head.

They started, and their sensitive steeds fidgeted beneath them.

"Mornin', Violet," said Mr. Laking.

"Mornin', Aubrey," said Miss Pardoe.

"Steady, there," said Mr. Laking, slapping his huge chestnut on the muscles of its neck.

"Quiet, old boy," said Miss Pardoe, leaning forward to perform a similar operation on the roan.

AND then, from away down the drive, came the toot of the huntsman's horn.

Horses, riders, pedestrians, bicyclists, and motor-cars all pressed forward, sorted themselves out into a long, straggling procession, and so passed—seriously and earnestly—towards the opening scene of the daily-repeated drama which has all Bassetshire for its stage. Why on earth do they do it, where in the world do they get the money from, and how in the name of fortune can they tolerate the endless monotony of a game for which all reasonable justification vanished with the invention of the bow and arrow?

Why, most particularly, do they one and all look at this moment—in their faces, we mean, not in their attire—as if they were going to church?

We don't know. We give it up; letting them drift away down the long drive to whatever the day shall bring them of scent, checks, views, enjoyable bursts, and all the rest of it. Yet before we also leave this front lawn we look up once more at that first-floor window, and there for the last time we see the large, blank face of the venerable Mrs. Axminster—staring fixedly at absolutely nothing at all.

For the last time, did we say? We did. Three weeks later there was another kind of meet at the hideous house. More motor-cars, this time; no horses; no red coats, riding-habits, little peaked velvet caps, brass buttons, white breeches, or safety-stirrups. No hounds, huntsman, or horn. The incomparable Ibbetts again hands round glasses of port-wine, but his trousers are no longer striped. Black as Erebus, they symbolize the sorrow which their wearer may or may not feel for the end of a long, peaceful, and almost entirely uneventful reign. After eighty-eight years in Bassetshire, Mrs. Axminster has—to employ an

ancient and grisly Bassetshire pleasantry—gone to earth.

The county has assembled to pay honour to this vanished greatness. It has crowded into the mouldy little church, stood about in the bleak little churchyard, and so come straggling back for refreshment—and to hear the will being read—at the huge and hideous house. It would probably have done all these things in any case, for it is a great county for ritual observances; but its duty has certainly been made much easier by the continuance of the hard frost, which, as well as killing Mrs. Axminster herself, has stopped all hunting for the past ten days.

The will contains nothing to surprise anyone. Practically everything goes to Mrs. Axminster's grandson—her last son died nearly twenty years ago—but as this gentleman is Master of a pack in another county, it is generally understood that the hideous house will in due course come on the market. Bassetshire quite realizes that a man's obligations to his own hunt are more important than any sentiment about a family seat; nor is it troubled by any serious doubt that, again in due course, the hideous house will find a suitable owner. There is no suggestion, at any rate, that the estate will be broken up, or the hideous house be turned into an hotel. That sort of thing doesn't happen in Bassetshire.

A string of legacies to minor dependents follows, including two hundred and fifty pounds to Herbert Walter Ibbetts, "in recognition of his faithful services as my butler, and the confidence that I have always reposed in him."

The lawyer's voice drones on, and presently stops. The assemblage breaks up, begins chatting cheerfully about hunting topics, agrees that the frost can't possibly last much longer, and so disperses to the numerous cars that fill the gravel sweep; climbs into them, drives away, and leaves Mr. Ibbetts to re-close the shutters in the hall and principal reception rooms.

BUT one member of the North, South, and West Bassetshire hunts lingers behind. Although this big, red-faced, blue-eyed man is as anxious as any of the other mourners to get out of his uncomfortable black clothes into his everyday tweeds, he sees here an opportunity which it will be as well not to miss. He re-enters the hideous house, and comes on the object of his search at once.

"Oh, Ibbetts," he says.

"Sir?"

"I don't know," says Mr. Laking, "whether you're fixed up with any plans for the future, what?"

"Plans, sir?"

"I mean to say, I suppose you'll be lookin' round for another place. Heh?"

"I've not quite decided, sir."

"Well, y'know," says Mr. Laking, genially, "two hundred and fifty quid won't last for ever, y'know. What?" And unable to keep from the real point any longer: "Now, see here, Ibbetts; why don't you come to me? I've had my eye on you for some time, y'know, and—ah——"

But Ibbetts now has his eye—both eyes, in fact—on Mr. Laking. The would-be employer's voice dies away in an embarrassed gurgle.

"A bit sudden, what?" he suggests, with a nervous laugh.

"Oh, no, sir," says the butler. "In fact, I may say that I've had a similar offer already."

"What! You haven't taken it, though?"

"No, sir. It all needs a little consideration, sir. But I'm very much obliged to you, Mr. Laking, all the same. Very much obliged indeed."

"Oh!" says Mr. Laking—baffled for the moment, but more obstinate than ever in his desire. "Well—look here, Ibbetts; think it over, what? If you want a bit of a holiday first, I dare say there's no tearin' hurry. Er—just let me know. Heh?"

A crinkly bank-note appears suddenly from his pocket.

"Thank *you*, sir. It's very good of you, sir, I'm sure."

The crinkly bank-note is no longer visible.

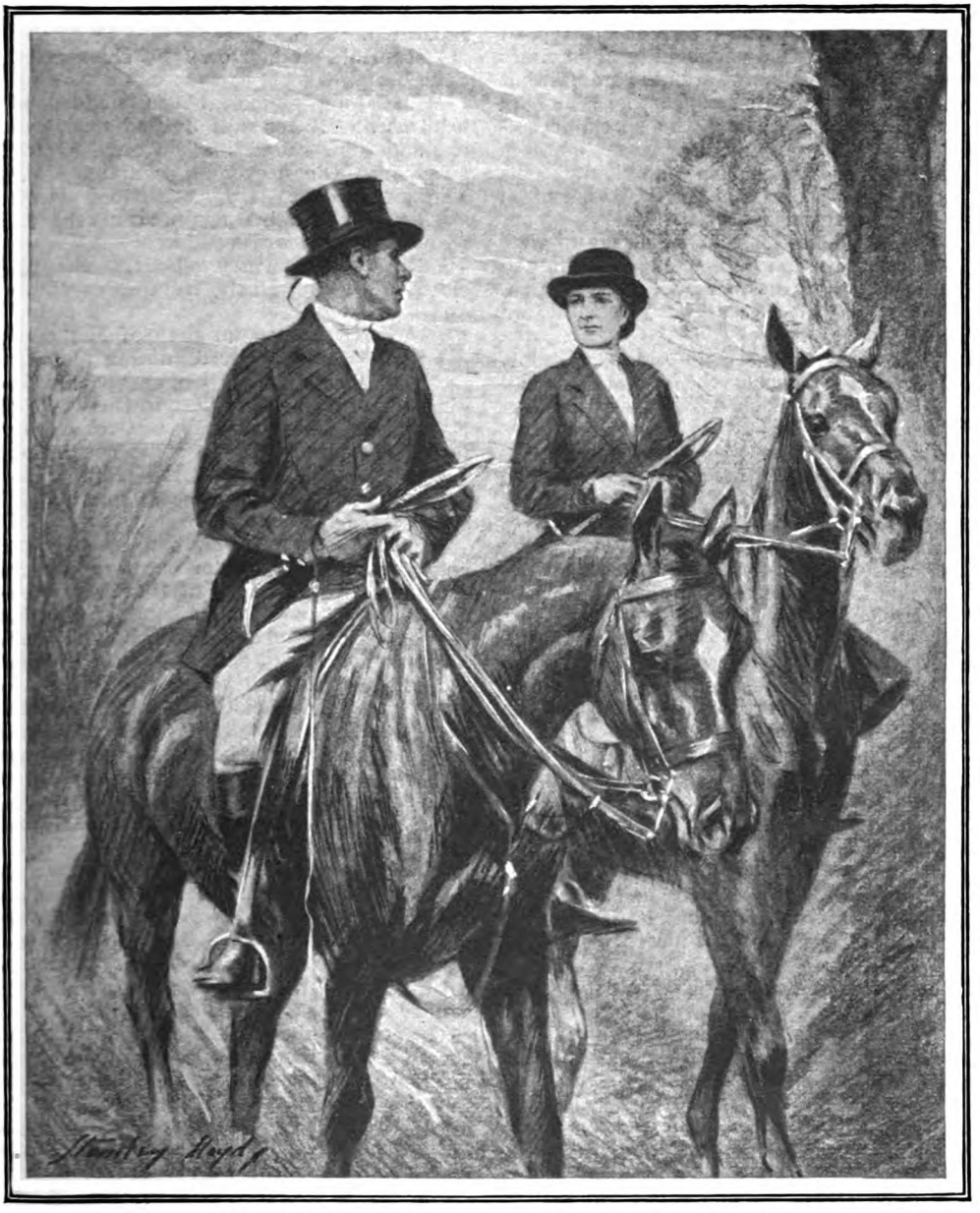
"Heh?" says Mr. Laking. "Well, don't forget, Ibbetts; what? Right. Any time, y'know."

And so he gets into his big car and drives away, sucking in his cheeks and occasionally beating with an imaginary crop at an imaginary riding-boot.

"Perhaps I ought to have found out who that other feller was," he ruminates. But it's too late now. And apart from all else he has a calm, well-founded belief that he generally gets what he wants. Oh, yes; it'll prob'ly be all right.

In the darkened hall of the hideous house the incomparable Ibbetts takes the crinkly bank-note from his trouser-pocket, smoothes it out, folds it, and puts it to join another crinkly bank-note of equal denomination—which had been given him twenty minutes earlier by Miss Violet Pardoe. He nods to himself, frowns, twists his mouth into a wintry smile, and goes on collecting the empty wine-glasses.

THE frost was swept away by an anti-cyclone moving slowly in from the south-west, and out came the North Bassetshire hounds again. "Meeting at Bloxley Lodge," says the special correspon-



"Dash it, Violet, what do *you* want with a new butler?"

dent of the *Bassetshire Herald*, "a fox was soon found in Hangman's Spinney, but hounds were run out of scent near Wisby Cross. Another fox from Stoke Wood was hunted through Blackhurst Bottom to Botany Copse, but, proving to be a vixen, hounds were stopped near the Blue Man at Green Hatches. Gorse End was drawn blank, but a fox from Snibley Holt provided a brisk run to Mr. Dodman's farm, where hounds were at fault. A fourth fox, found near the badger earths, was hunted through the outskirts of Little Clem and across the railway to Loopy Oak. A friendly holloa helped hounds through Great Gobley Park to a point near the Devil's Pantry, where scent failed and hounds were taken home."

An excellent day, no doubt—and not least, so far as we can interpret this report, for the foxes. One particularly appreciates that act of chivalry towards the animal that suddenly changed its sex near the Blue Man at Green Hatches, and the special correspondent's literary gusto brings quite a flavour of leather-polish across the footlights. Well done, the North Bassetshire! Well done, their favourite scribe!

Jogging home on the big chestnut after this laborious and well-spent day, Aubrey Laking overtook another rider on a big roan.

"'Lo, Violet," he said. "Feelin' fit, an' all that?"

"'Lo, Aubrey," said Miss Pardoe. "Haven't see you since the funeral. What?"

"Dreary sort of show," said Mr. Laking. "Heh?"

"Absolutely," said Miss Pardoe.

They rode about three-quarters of a mile without exchanging any further confidences, and then Mr. Laking suddenly bubbled over with the subject that had been occupying his mind ever since their last meeting.

"You know Ibbetts?" he said.

"Mrs. Axminster's butler?"

"That's the feller. Good man an' all that, what?"

"Priceless."

"By Jove, you're right. I'm tryin' to get hold of him, y'know."

"So am I," said Miss Pardoe.

"What's that?"

"I said, 'So am I.'"

"You're not," said Mr. Laking.

"Sorry," said Miss Pardoe; "but I am."

In the dusk of the evening her companion thought he saw a smile on her large, weather-beaten face, and a kind of flush appeared on his own.

"Steady," he said. "You're not rottin', are you?"

"Rather not," said Miss Pardoe. "I spoke to him about it at the funeral. He's goin' to let me know."

"But I spoke to him too," said Mr. Laking. "And, dash it, Violet, what do *you* want with a new butler? Heh?"

"I mean to have him," said Miss Pardoe, "anyway. And what's more, old thing, he's engaged to my maid, Mullins."

"He's not."

"He is," said Miss Pardoe. "So you can see what sort of a chance you stand. I've had my eye on that man for years."

The flush on Mr. Laking's face grew darker than ever.

"We'll see," he growled.

"Bear up, Aubrey," said Miss Pardoe. "There's lots of good fish in the sea, y'know."

She gave a powerful tug at the big roan's mouth, and it drew up. They were at the cross-roads where their homeward journeys separated.

"Huntin' to-morrow?" she asked, casually.

Mr. Laking glared at her, nodded his head as though his skilfully-tied stock were choking him, raised his hat, and trotted away into the deepening twilight. Miss Pardoe gave a lazy, contented laugh, slackened the reins again, and the big roan also set off for its stables.

"Nothin' to worry about," she decided. "I've got all the trumps."

SOAKING in his hot bath of Halliday's Sportsman's Mustard, dining alone at his big mahogany table, and slowly sipping some of the best port in the whole of Bassetshire, Aubrey Laking was reluctantly forced to very much the same conclusion. Violet Pardoe *had* got all the trumps, and there seemed no conceivable method of securing a fresh deal.

He knew the maid Mullins by sight; a colourless creature whom one would have thought quite unworthy of Ibbetts's attention. But that didn't make it any easier to suggest that she should give him up. Were there any alternatives, then? Would a lump sum in cash encourage Ibbetts to break off this vexatious entanglement? Well, it might; but, if it failed, it would shut, bar, and bolt the doors against any further attempts in the same direction. He'd look a bit of an ass—wouldn't he?—if Violet got to hear of it; as she almost certainly would.

If only—for a moment this seemed a wonderful idea—he could induce the maid to give a month's notice and enter his own employment. By Jove, that ought to fix it, and—— Yes, but he couldn't take on a lady's maid if he hadn't got a wife. The county would start talking at once.

He poured himself out another glass of that unparalleled port, and gently passed his foot over the back of the big retriever that lay sleeping on his hearthrug. Supposing—here was a notion; supposing he *did* get married. Ibbetts would obviously prefer being in a man's service; any decent butler would, and especially after ten years with old Mrs. Axminster; and then, with a wife to chaperon and be looked after by Mrs. Ibbetts, he'd hold a winning hand after all.

By Jove, the more one went into it the more one saw that it was a stroke of absolute genius. Besides, he'd been meaning to get married for years—only he'd been so busy huntin' that he hadn't had time.

Now, let's see. There was little Dolly Scarsdale. How about—— Oh, no, though; he'd forgotten. Stupid, considerin' that

he'd been Bill Blakelock's best man at that wedding five years ago. Or six, was it? Well, never mind. What about little Di Mapleson? He'd always felt he could shake down with her. And—— Dash it, though; she'd gone and got spliced too. He remembered now; they'd roped him in as a godfather.

Well, who else was there? In the smoke of the big logs that smouldered and then turned to white ash on his open hearth, Mr. Laking passed in review a series of fresh young faces that he had met in the days when he still used to turn out for the North, South, and West Bassetshire Hunt balls. But they were all married. 'Straordinary thing how he'd never noticed it at the time, but it was a fact.

"By George," muttered Mr. Laking to himself, "it's beginning to look as if I'd missed the bus."

Of course there were always new bevies of flappers coming out of the schoolroom—and getting confoundedly in the way in the hunting-field—but, dash it, he wasn't the feller to make a fool of himself like that. No, no; he wanted a girl of his own generation; about thirty-five, say, or a bit older. He wasn't going in for pram-snatching at his time of life.

He scowled at those glowing logs. He passed an anxious hand over the little bald spot on the back of his head.

"Funny thing," he said, with a yawn. "But the other fellers seem to have snapped 'em all up."

One more glass of port, to repair the tissue wasted in this painful and unwonted use of his brain, and Aubrey Laking staggered off upstairs. A printed card, propped up on his dressing-table, told him the venue of to-morrow's meet. He made a mental note of its message, rolled into bed, and fell fast asleep.

AT the same moment of time Miss Violet Pardoe was sitting in front of her own dressing-table, while the maid Mullins brushed steadily away at her long, unshingled hair.

"Well," said Miss Pardoe, presently, "have you spoken to Ibbetts again?"

"Yes, miss," said Mullins. "And he says he's very much obliged to you, miss, and he's thinking it over."

"But that's what he said last time," complained Miss Pardoe. "Why can't he make up his mind?"

"Well, miss," said Mullins, "I think it's possible that Mr. Ibbetts would rather like to be in service with some gentleman, miss, for a change."

Miss Pardoe looked a little vexed.

"But surely," she said, "if he's married to you, Mullins, he'd prefer to be in the same place. Wouldn't he?"

The mirror opposite her reflected (as well as her own large, red-faced, blue-eyed image) an expression of dispassionate reserve on the pale countenance of the maid Mullins.

"He's thinking it over, miss," the reflection repeated.

"Oh," said Miss Pardoe.

And difficult and unfamiliar as the process was, she began thinking it over also. If Ibbetts were going to take this line, and if Mullins were going to accept whatever instructions he gave her, there was now an appalling possibility that she might lose both of them. More maddening still, if she appealed to Mullins's loyalty and sense of honour, she might merely precipitate matters by putting an idea into her head of which she was not yet completely conscious. Most maddening of all, she had given the show away to Aubrey Laking, who—if her fears were correct, and if he only had the sense to see it—had now got her practically at his mercy.

Not for the first time in her thirty-seven years Miss Pardoe cursed the luck which had made her ride side-saddle. What use were her house, stables, horses, and typically Bassetshire income if, when it came to the real point, her sex were to rise up and defeat her like this?

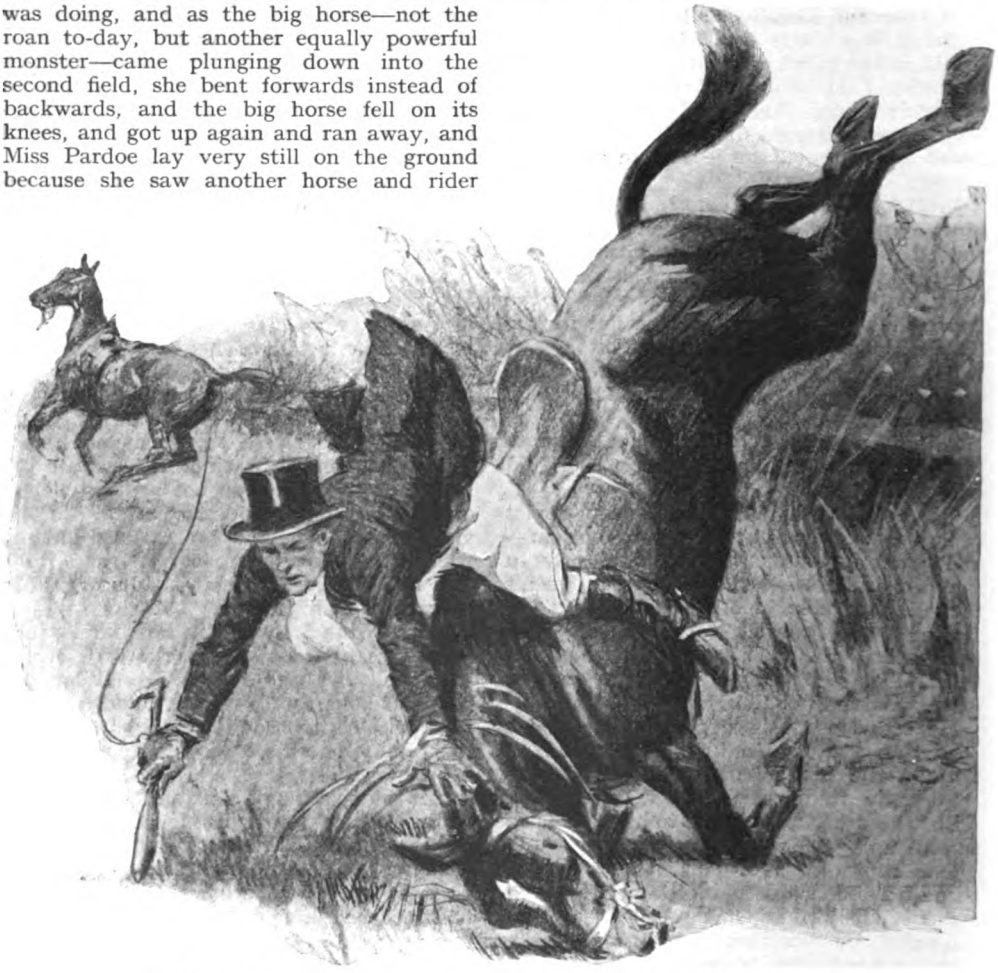
"Is there nothing I can do?" she groaned, as the grey light of dawn crept slowly round the edges of her bedroom window curtains. And her mind, also, went back to the hunt balls of long ago, when her face hadn't been quite so large or so red; when various men—now all with wives of their own—had tried to pay her compliments; when she—self-sufficient through the fate which had flung her father head-first on to a heap of flints by the roadside—had laughed at them, cut them short, and hustled them back to the ballroom.

And now, just because she had done all this, she was to lose the best butler in Bassetshire. Was there *nothing* that she could do?

AND then in came Mullins with the early-morning tea, and Miss Pardoe rose, and attired herself in her riding-habit, and partook of a hearty breakfast, and set off for the meet at Marsh End. And hounds did this and hounds did that—all of which is duly chronicled by the special correspondent of the *Bassetshire Herald*—and presently the whole hunt went careering downhill over some green crops, and bounded through or over the hedge at the bottom, and straggled up the long rise on the far side.

But for once in her life Miss Pardoe had forgotten where she was going or what she

was doing, and as the big horse—not the roan to-day, but another equally powerful monster—came plunging down into the second field, she bent forwards instead of backwards, and the big horse fell on its knees, and got up again and ran away, and Miss Pardoe lay very still on the ground because she saw another horse and rider



Miss Pardoe lay very still on the ground because she saw another horse and

occupying the whole firmament over her head.

"Don't move!" shouted the rider; and he jerked at his horse's mouth, and it crossed its feet, and fell down with a thud, and got up again and ran away. And there was Aubrey Laking, with his top-hat bearing a striking resemblance to a concertina, rolling over and over like a large red ninepin.

Presently he stopped doing this, and stood up and shook himself.

"'Lo, Violet," he said. "Any bones broken?"

"No, thanks," said Miss Pardoe, also rising to her feet. "You all right?"

"Absolutely," said Mr. Laking, shaking himself again. "Wait there and I'll catch your horse."

"Rubbish!" said Miss Pardoe. "You'd better catch your own."

"Catch 'em both," said Mr. Laking, valiantly. He looked to the left, to the right, and straight ahead. "By Jove!" he added, apologetically, "I believe they've gone home."

"Let 'em," said Miss Pardoe.

"What?" said Mr. Laking.

They stared at each other. Mr. Laking's left cheek was covered with mud, and Miss Pardoe's long, unshingled hair was coming down.

"I said, 'Let 'em,'" she repeated, recklessly.

"By Jove!" said Mr. Laking. "Violet—I say, by George!"

"Well?"

"By gosh! Violet, you're——"

"Yes? What am I?"

"This is a bit sudden," said Mr. Laking; "but will you marry me?"

"Yes," said Miss Pardoe. "When?"

"By James!" said Mr. Laking. "As soon as we can dashed well fix it up."

rider occupying the whole firmament over her head.

A few birds, and possibly a cow or two in the next field, were the only witnesses of that first embrace. It wouldn't have photographed well, and even an artist would have had a hard job to interpret it in terms of youth or beauty. But for the two principals it was wholly satisfactory; and—which is perhaps equally relevant and important—it was Bassetshire to the core.

They found their two steeds pulling the side out of a haystack at the corner of Whiteway Copse; they mounted them again, and set forth in search of the hunt. What is more, they found it, and after an enjoyable burst of thirty-five minutes—at the end of which scent was suddenly lost—they again drew together.

"Look here," said Mr. Laking, abruptly, "I've got to be honest about this, Violet. It was——"

"Don't tell me," interrupted Miss Pardoe, "or I might have to be honest, too. But it's all right now, isn't it? Even if we hadn't got Ibbetts, we've still got——"

"Each other," said Mr. Laking. "What?"

"Absolutely," said Miss Pardoe.

SO you see how even in Bassetshire romance will come out on top in the end. We don't pretend—we simply cannot pretend—that this newly-engaged couple were either young or good-looking, or that they possessed enough joint intelligence to be put in charge of an infants' school; unless, that is to say, the infants were to be bred and educated for no other purpose than hunting. But we do say, because it is true and because it pleases us that it should be so, that they are now living very happily ever afterwards; and that not even frost or foot-and-mouth disease can seriously affect the calm joy that they take in each other's company.

And this, for every reason, is just as well. But particularly is it as well because, as it turned out, their married life began and still continues without the assistance of either the incomparable Ibbetts or his colourless but devoted bride. You are surprised? Then think again. What happens to butlers in Bassetshire who are left legacies, and are given large tips, and are affianced to ladies' maids? Do they ever, by any conceivable chance, go on being butlers?

Of course they don't. Kindly raise your eyes to the low lintel of the Blue Man at Green Hatches, and tell us what you read there.

"Herbert Walter Ibbetts, licensed to sell beer, wines, and spirits."

That, having played his part in the affair of Mr. Laking and Miss Pardoe, is the last and final incarnation of old Mrs. Axminster's incomparable butler.

GOSSIP AND GOSSIPERS

By

SIDNEY DARK

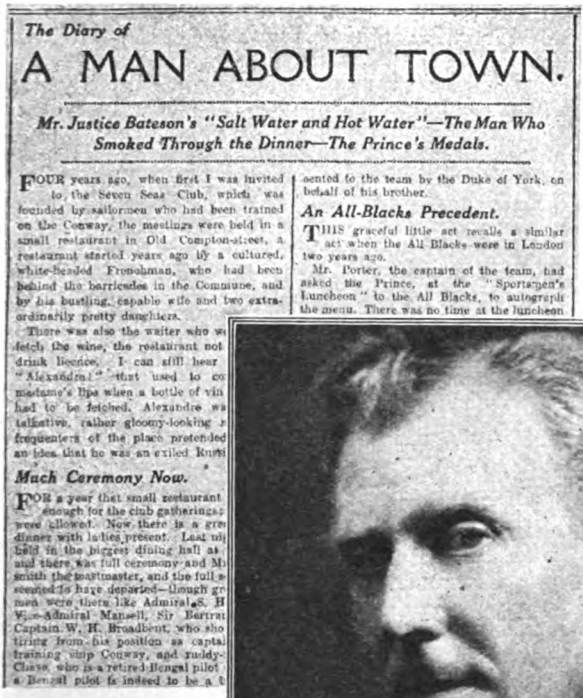
THERE may be dourly virtuous people in the world to whom life is so serious and so real that they shiver at the very idea of spending cosy hours in inconsequent light-hearted gossip. But if such persons exist, from my point of view, they are persons to be avoided. The common natural man and, particularly, perhaps, the common natural woman quite properly enjoy a good gossip, and the modern newspaper, with its genius for the discovery of what the public wants, finds in its daily or weekly gossip—generally well-informed and nearly always good-natured—one of its most attractive features.

Mr. Hannen Swaffer.
("The Daily Express.")
Photo: Foulsham & Banfield.

Newspaper gossip has many forms—learned gossip, political gossip, theatrical gossip, humorous gossip, gossip about books, gossip about the gossiper, gossip with a "punch," and so on—and for my part I confess I find most of it eminently readable.

The gossiper is obviously a most important person, but he generally coyly hides his identity behind a pen-name. Good gossip, whether it is written or spoken, demands considerable qualities, and the newspaper gossipers are a very considerable body of men. The famous "Londoner" of *The Evening News*, for example, is a shy, retiring scholar, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, a genealogist of distinction, and an authority on armour. There are few achievements of modern journalism so remarkable as his production every day of a thousand words chat, intimate, popular, and, at the same time, very learned, for a period of considerably over a quarter of a century. In a sense he is the gossiper in the library, though he is saved from pedantic dullness by frequent incursions into the street.

An entire contrast to "The Londoner" in character, method, and interests is Mr. Hannen Swaffer, one of the most humorous, the most original, and most daring of contemporary journalists. Mr. Swaffer claims that he is the inventor of that gossip which is in effect the history of to-day written from a definite personal point of view. When I



The Diary of

A MAN ABOUT TOWN.

Mr. Justice Bateson's "Salt Water and Hot Water"—The Man Who Smoked Through the Dinner—The Prince's Medals.

FOUR years ago, when first I was invited to the Seven Seas Club, which was founded by sailormen who had been trained on the Conway, the meetings were held in a small restaurant in Old Compton-street, a restaurant started years ago by a cultured, white-headed Frenchman, who had been behind the barricades in the Commune, and by his bustling, capable wife and two extraordinarily pretty daughters.

There was also the waiter who w fetch the wine, the restaurant not drink licence. I can still hear "Alexandre!" that used to ex madame's lips when a bottle of vin had to be fetched. Alexandre wa talkative, rather gloomy-looking frequenters of the place pretended an idea that he was an exiled Kurd

Much Ceremony Now.

FOR a year that small restaurant enough for the club gatherings were allowed. Now there is a gra dinner with ladies present. Last ni held in the biggest dining hall as and there was full ceremony and M smith the toastmaster, and the full seemed to have departed—though gr men were there like Admiral S. H Vice-Admiral Mansell, Sir Bertra Captain W. H. Broadbent, who sho tiring from his position as capta training ship Conway, and Buddy Clase, who is a retired Bengal pilot a Bengal pilot is indeed to be a

sented to the team by the Duke of York, on behalf of his brother.

An All-Blacks Precedent.

THIS graceful little act recalls a similar act when the All Blacks were in London two years ago.

Mr. Porter, the captain of the team, had asked the Prince, at the "Sportsmen's Luncheon" to the All Blacks, to autograph the menu. There was no time at the luncheon

Mr. George Nichols.
("Quex" of "The Evening News.")
Photo: Coster.

first knew him, Hannen Swaffer was a sub-editor on the staff of *The Express*. From there he went to *The Daily Mirror*, where he worked with the late Alexander Kenealy and had some hand in that paper's gossip page, which has always been very discreet and under-coloured. It was, however, when he became editor of *The Weekly Dispatch* that Hannen Swaffer first had the opportunity to show his quality as a journalist. He invented the "Secret History of the Week," which still appears in *The Weekly Dispatch*, and it is said, and I believe accurately, that during the war the most interesting paragraphs concerning soldiers and statesmen were written at Swaffer's suggestion by Lord Northcliffe himself.

From *The Weekly Dispatch* Hannen Swaffer went to *The Daily Graphic*, where he started "Wonderful London Yesterday." He has a very definite theory of what a gossip page should be. To begin with, he is persuaded that it should be the work of one man, and that every paragraph should suggest the personality of that one man as completely as a portrait suggests the personality of the painter and a poem the personality of the poet. Swaffer's motto is *l'audace, encore l'audace, toujours l'audace*. He has no respect for dignitaries. He has an enormous and by no means unreasonable belief in himself. He is a kindly, witty newspaper adventurer, and I think it is fair to say that as a personal paragraphist he has no peer. After a brief period as editor of *The People* he went back to *The Daily Express*, for which he now writes pungent theatrical criticisms and paragraphs which never lack anything in definiteness, whatever else may be said for them.

It is amusing to see Swaffer sitting in the Savoy Restaurant, as it were at the receipt of customs, theatre magnates from America whispering information to him and leading players seeking his advice. Most journalists have to seek the news, but the news that he particularly seeks comes of itself to Swaffer.

I have said that Lord Northcliffe used regularly to contribute paragraphs to *The Weekly Dispatch's* "Secret History of the Week," and this is not the only instance of the proprietor turned paragraphist. Lord Beaverbrook is frequently among the contributors to "The Londoner's Diary" in *The Evening Standard*, and all the most interesting paragraphs in the always well-informed gossip column in *The News of the World* come from Lord Riddell, who knows more things about more people than any man whom I have ever met. Lord Riddell has infinite curiosity and eclectic interest. He is a mighty hunter of facts before the face of the Lord. Dining out is one of his amusements, and he likes to sit next to new people; one night, maybe,

an American architect, the next night a medical specialist, and the next a German social reformer. From each of them Lord Riddell will extract, with the eager blandness that is all his own, some interesting information, as well as a considerable revelation of character. After an hour or two he will have a shrewd idea of the character of the man with whom he has been talking, while the facts that he has collected will set his mind—a very nimble mind, by the way—on a new quest, with the result that informative articles on American architecture, medical developments, and German social reform will appear in one of the papers that he controls, and half-a-dozen acute little paragraphs will be printed in *The News of the World*. Lord Riddell is a collector. Some men collect first editions, other men collect pictures, still others collect stamps. There was once a stockbroker who collected boots. Lord Riddell collects facts, and few men have so varied and so interesting a selection.

"QUEX" of *The Evening News* is Mr. George Nichols. If it may be said that Swaffer has inspiration, Nichols has method. He served with distinction during the war in the Gunners. He has a genius for making friends and retaining friendships. His manners are delightful. He is the pleasantest of companions, and men and women of all sorts and conditions are glad to be of service to him. It will be readily understood that these are the characteristics required by a man whose everyday life must of necessity be an interesting series of incidents, if not an awfully fine adventure, if he is to be able "to deliver the goods."

The way of the daily gossiper is hard. The ordinary man can lunch and dine where he likes, selecting his hosts or his guests for entirely personal reasons. But when the professional gossiper wakes up in the morning he has to remember that before the evening so many paragraphs have to be written, and that each paragraph must be about a person. When he opens his letters he may find three invitations to lunch, and he must decide which he shall accept and which he shall refuse, unaffected by the quality of food or drink to be reasonably anticipated, and entirely from the amount of copy that each is likely to produce; and similarly with tea, and similarly with dinner. It must not, however, be supposed that the successful gossiper is merely a gramophone who reproduces the amusing things that he has heard. He must be something of a discoverer, finding out interests which the average man would miss, and qualities in his acquaintance of which the average man would never dream. It is because life is so perennially interesting to a man like George Nichols that he is able to write gossip that is always interesting to read. Nichols is a good golfer and a better listener, with an expert's knowledge of what to remember and what to forget.

The gossiper must never be a bore. For him the road from his house to his club, from his club to his theatre, from his theatre to his office must of necessity be roses, roses all the way. He must be an unconquerable optimist, and from this point of view George Nichols is superlatively well equipped. Four-fifths of "The Diary of a Man About Town" in *The Evening News* is Nichols's own work. The political paragraphs with which the diary sometimes starts used to be written by the late Lovat Fraser, a political journalist who had spent the greater part of his life in India, and it is said—I am not able to vouch for the accuracy of the rumour—that nowadays they sometimes come from the pen of that very shrewd Parliamentarian, Commander Locker-Lampson, who, among other things, is editor of *The Empire Review*.

ONE of the best-informed gossip pages in London was, and to an extent still is, "The Londoner's Diary" in *The Evening Standard*. It was started during the editorship of Mr. A. H. Mann, who is now the editor of *The Yorkshire Post*, and at the beginning was largely written by Mr. E. R. Thompson, who, as E. T. Raymond, is the author of acute studies of modern politicians, and is now *The Evening Standard*'s editor. "The Londoner's Diary," however, began to be distinguished when Lord Beaverbrook engaged the late Mr. G. H. Mair as a member of his staff. George Mair was a journalist of extraordinary ability. He was the son of a Scottish naval surgeon. He went from Aberdeen to Christ Church, Oxford, began his working life as private secretary to the late Lord Dunraven, afterwards joined the staff of *The Manchester Guardian*, and became during the war what was most inaccurately described as "the permanent head" of the Ministry of Information.

I began what developed into a very intimate friendship with George Mair in Paris during the Peace Congress, and I have never known a man with such sound judgment and such wide and varied information. Between Paris and his joining *The Evening Standard*, Mair was a prominent official of the League of Nations, and it may be quite safely said that there was not a European notability in the world of politics, art, or the theatre with whom he was not

Westminster's Bachelors—Motoring Law—Great Art Show.

A LONDONER'S DIARY

EVENING STANDARD, Friday Evening.

The Bachelor M.P.s.

If the bachelor M.P.s hold a dinner this year, as they did last, they ought seriously to consider putting into practice a suggestion which has been made to them by a cynical married man, namely, that each of them should take a solemn vow of celebacy.

Leading bachelors like Sir James Agg-Gardner and Sir Robert Horne must be seriously concerned at the defections from their ranks. At present two members have announced their engagements, Mr. Edmund Brocklebank and Mr. Otho William Nicholson.

It is noteworthy that the youngest M.P., Sir H. Lucas-Tooth, is a husband and father, and the oldest but one, Sir James Agg-Gardner, is the organiser of the bachelor dinner parties. The younge[st] ba[chelor] in the House is Mr. Rob[ert] Bo[scawen].

Motorcars as Obstructions.

Numerous prosecutions of motorists seem to show that the view held in police courts is that the mere fact of leaving a car unattended on a highway is a punishable offence. But, as far as I know, there is no justification for this view unless the car constitutes an obstruction.

The definition of an obstruction, however, is uncertain, chiefly because, as is often the case in modern legislation, the subject is dealt with in various Acts, which have given rise to con[flicting] [decisions] under the [Act] [of] [1835] [which] suffi[ces] [to] be [the] [law] [of] [the] [land].

Art House to-morrow, [the] average of ten hours a day [for] [four] days arranging them to go and paint at Aix-en-Provence, which Cezanne, the modern idol, has immortalised in the same way that Constable has immo[rtalised] [Salisbury] [Cathedral].

The [illegible] left and not the on- the hat the ous ris, few ras, ned art em rei- gy-

erman Lawn Tennis Star.

If Otto Froitzheim, the German lawn tennis star of 1914, should come to Wimbledon with a German team this year, as he may do, he will be crossing an old trail that led to misfortune.

In that year he was fancied as a finalist, but failed to come up to scratch. Later in the year, while he was in America, the war

Mr. Philip Page (left), Miss Edith Shackleton, and Mr. Edward Shanks.

("The Evening Standard.")

Photos: Mault & Fox, Hoppé, and Elliott & Fry.

personally acquainted. He wrote—be it added, very admirably—as one having authority and not as the mere scribes of Fleet Street. The idea of "The Londoner's Diary" is very different from "The Diary of a Man About Town." It is concerned with the personalities of people of outstanding distinction rather than with the pleasant qualities of persons of smaller importance, and the wideness of Mair's knowledge and the accuracy of his information gave *The Evening Standard* a flair which it has perhaps partly lost since his death, and which is to be found in no page of gossip in any other paper. Nowadays "The Londoner's Diary" is written mainly by Philip Page, Edward Shanks, and Edith Shackleton. Philip Page is a large, impressive man who was at Brasenose and edited the *Isis* during his Oxford days. He is a considerable musician, and began his journalism by writing musical criticism, to which he has now returned in the columns of the Beaverbrook Press. Page is a serious person who has found a job altogether to his liking in the once sedate columns of *The Evening Standard*. Earlier in his career he was a purveyor of the "personal par." But it bored him to death to be obliged to record that a leading musical comedy actress invariably drank port when she ate roast chestnuts, and that a gifted poet ascribed his inspiration to the fact that he always wrote with green ink. Gossip to Mr. Nichols is a very serious profession. To Mr. Swaffer it is an amusing adventure. To Mr. Page it was something of a trial.

Edward Shanks is perhaps the most inspired of contemporary minor poets. He is, too, a critic of letters with genuine taste and culture, and he was for some considerable time associated with J. C. Squire on the editorial staff of *The London Mercury*. His acquaintance is wide, his discretion is unqualified, and he gives to the "Diary" the literary touch that is essential to its character.

Edith Shackleton is the pen-name of Miss Heald, a remarkably gifted woman journalist whose brother, Ivan Heald, would have been the outstanding humorist of his age but for his untimely death during the war. Women write a great deal of gossip, generally about parties and frocks, but Miss Heald competes with men journalists in their own world, and is far better than most.

PAGES IN WAITING.

SPEECHES OF THE PRINCE.

One hears that the selection promised us of the Prince of Wales's speeches has not yet, for one reason or another, taken shape. It is, however, being worked on, and probably the book may be at the disposal of readers by midsummer. The plan is to give ing and most important of t rom the beginning of his esent time.

Popular N

The s is to get their ne he heavier works co cy, Ernest Benn am . D. Maxwell, "Th e are told of it "th one of the most bea in English literature. he spring will be Mr. Young Men in Love," Its heroine will also not the only one from H

An Indian Regi

The mar ment is to Reginald regime win." Li

Mr. James Milne.
("The Daily Telegraph.")
Photo: Swaine.

The master of literary gossip is Mr. James Milne, who was for years on the staff of *The Daily Chronicle* and now writes a weekly column in *The Daily Telegraph*. Mr. Milne is a Scotsman whose many years' residence at Herne Bay has left him with his Scottish accent. He knows every author of note, and, what is of far more use for his purpose, every publisher of importance. He, too, has an established reputation for discretion, and he probably always knows more about the future plans of the great publishing houses than any other newspaper man. James Milne's method is to take a little gentle stroll once or twice a week from publishing house to publishing house, gathering a little news here and a little news there, all of which is tidily and methodically arranged in his mind and made into the interesting columns which he writes at the Caledonian Club—and afterwards to Herne Bay, and to bed.

It is curious, by the way, that literary gossip is almost a Scottish monopoly. The late Sir William Robertson Nicoll was an inspired gossiper, and his literary gossip was a feature of *The British Weekly*, which he created and edited. Mr. Brodie Fraser, another Scotsman, writes literary gossip for *The Sunday Times*. Mr. David Hodge, the London correspondent of *The Glasgow Evening News*, is a frequent writer of the literary par, and Mr. George Blake, the brilliant young Scotsman who is acting editor of *John o' London's Weekly*, is always a mine of literary information.

Gossip of an order of its own has appeared daily since the war in *The Daily Express* over the signature of "Beachcomber." It was given its peculiar character by Mr. D. B. Wyndham Lewis, a writer of irresistible wit and amazingly wide reading. Mr. Wyndham Lewis, who is still a comparatively young man, rightly decided that it was impossible every day to turn out fun of a high order, and his altogether delightful fooling now appears once or twice a week in *The Daily Mail* and other papers. He lives now mainly in Paris.

"Beachcomber" never changes, but the principal contributor to his gossip does, and Mr. Wyndham Lewis's successor is Mr. J. B. Morton, whose father was for years on the staff of *The Referee* and the author of "San Toy" and other successful musical plays produced by the late George Edwardes. Mr. Morton is another humorist with some-

Mr. D. B. Wyndham Lewis.
("The Daily Mail.")
Photo: Vaughan & Freeman.

By the Way.

On this day, in the year 1100, a charcoal-burner named Purkiss, driving his cart homewards, discovered a man lying dead with an arrow through his breast. He lifted the body and took it to Winchester Palace.

The man was William Rufus, King of England, and the place where he died is probably near Chormingham, close to the road from Lymington to Salisbury. Tyrell, the man who shot him, terrified at the whole business, spurred ... and embarked on ... so much. ... his ... of ... ly ... and ... outlined ... er hands ... it." It is the ... ndon are more or less at peace, since everybody has gone away to the country, and is being tormented by his fellow-men. It is the day when the Penny Bizarre poets go mad

blouse, and a flowing jacket of rose-coloured chiffon," etc., etc.

All the best people tell me that when you are really bored with the whole business of holidays, there is nothing like clothes to make you laugh. I can imagine the lady in question smiling at the sky-blue trousers, breaking into a happy, care-free laugh at the sleeveless blouse, and simply rolling from side to side in hysterics at the jacket of rose-coloured chiffon. How often have I not sat and howled with mirth at my boots, bless me!

* * *

Mr. Thake Writes.

Dear Beachcomber,—

It is no good. I shall have to go. Can never find peace anywhere? This frightfamily will not let me alone. To-day daughter put ... on my back ... "Glass, ... care." I ask ... What is a ... do? It is ... That silly ... ss said to ... see you are ... glass." I ... I don't ... know what ... th you are ... about." ... aid, "Look ... r back." I ... "How can I? ... not a walking ... or." She said, ... erhaps you are ... errors are made ... f glass." I said angrily, "That may well be." And then Lord F—— took the label off my coat and showed it to me. I tore it up, amid absurd laughter. It's all very well, but one cannot write to a British consul about that kind of thing. It's too much.

And then a lady asked me if I collected lighthouses. I said of course I didn't. Whereupon she asked me why I had so many model ones. When I told her it was an error of my valet, she tapped her forehead, and that awful girl "Chick" shouted stridently, "Bats in the belfry." ...

Mr. J. B. Morton.
("The Daily Express.")

thing like genius. *Daily Express* readers have reason to be grateful for his invention of "Mr. Thake."

Until the recent introduction of a gossip column as a regular feature, *The Daily Mail* contented itself with a few well-informed society paragraphs written by a near relative of a duke. Society gossip has always been a feature of the *Mail*, and for years it was written by the late Mr. C. P. Little, who before taking to journalism was a successful actor. "Green Room Gossip" was printed twice a week in the *Mail's* early days. Its editor was Mr. Boyle Lawrence, and among the contributors to the column was the late Addison Bright, who has his place in literary history, since it was he who first persuaded Sir James Barrie to write plays, and, indeed, collaborated with him in the stage version of "The Little Minister." The *Mail* Green Room Gossip is now written by Mr. William Pollock.

The gossip columns of *The Daily Chronicle* and *The Daily News* are always well informed and carefully edited, though they are not the work of any one single writer. The late Clarence Rook, a journalist of outstanding distinction, wrote the gossip in *The Daily Chronicle* for many years.

In certain papers where space is of great importance—this applies particularly to the picture papers—dramatic and literary criticism takes the form of gossipy paragraphs, and no one writes such criticism more cleverly than Mr. Herbert Farjeon in *The Sunday Pictorial*. Mr. Herbert Farjeon is the son of a well-known novelist and has himself written admirable plays. He is a brother of Eleanor Farjeon, a poetess of many moods whose nonsense verses are printed day by day in *The Daily Herald* over the signature of "Tom Fool." *The Sunday Pictorial* is a popular paper, but Mr. Farjeon is a highbrow whose judgments are good and whose paragraphic style is admirable.

Among the more recent recruits to the gossipers is Mr. Allan Parsons, who writes for *The Daily Sketch*, and Viscount Castlerosse, who writes for *The Sunday Express*. Mr. Parsons's interests are mainly theatrical, and this is not surprising, since he is the husband of that clever and fascinating lady, Miss Viola Tree. Viscount Castlerosse is a

stout, jolly-looking man who will one day be an earl, and who looks like Henry VIII. with his beard shaved off. He is the "gifted amateur" among gossipers. To Viscount Castlerosse gossip is apparently a jolly rag, though it is doubtful whether his friends, who are the subjects of his paragraphs, can always really enjoy the joke. Lord Castlerosse is always kindly and generally amusing, but the hand of the amateur appears when he makes such rare discoveries as "Champagne is a luxury to us, but it is an important industry to France"!

Mr. Herbert Farjeon.
("The Sunday Pictorial.")
Photo: "The Sunday Pictorial."

of one man. The principal provincial newspapers have a considerable staff of their own in London, and outsiders occasionally contribute paragraphs to the "London Letters." Mr. James Bone of *The Manchester Guardian* is nowadays the most distinguished of the London correspondents. He is the brother of Mr. Muirhead Bone, and his two recently published books on London and Edinburgh have demonstrated the fact that he is a man of letters and no mere journalist, and as such worthy in every way to be on the staff of the English

Viscount Castlerosse.
("The Sunday Express.")
Photo: Keystone View Co.

The generally well-informed "London Letters" in the great provincial newspapers are, as a rule, a combination of news and gossip, but the gossip is generally concerned with the serious rather than with the trivial, and the political rather than with the theatrical. These letters are rarely the work

newspaper distinguished among its contemporaries for its high literary excellence.

For many years Sir Alfred Robbins, eager newspaper man, enthusiastic theatre-goer, and prominent Freemason, was the *doyen* of the provincial London Letter writers. Sir Alfred was the representative of *The Birmingham Daily Post*. He was the best-known of the many journalists whose wearisome business it is to haunt the lobbies of the House of Commons. He was the confidant of many statesmen, particularly of the late Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, and he was able frequently to send his paper confidential information unknown to the London dailies. Sir Alfred Robbins's career is a proof of the fact, which all journalists know and most laymen doubt, that success in the profession depends above all things on a reputation for discretion. Years ago when Mr. Bernard Shaw was a musical critic a friend remonstrated with him for the severity of his printed condemnations. "Oh," said Mr. Shaw, "you don't know what I think and never write!" Similarly the journalist, who is denounced for printing secrets which everybody knows, has often been entrusted in confidence with information which the world would eagerly read, but which, because it has been told him in confidence, he refrains from printing.

Most of the folk about whom the gossipers gossip love to see their names in print, and I know no instance of modern times when the gossip column has been the occasion of an action for libel against editor and publisher. Perhaps writers are more careful nowadays, or celebrities more thick-skinned. Anyhow, the pioneers of the craft found it far more perilous. Edmund Yates, who may be said to have invented the personal paragraph as we know it nowadays, was expelled from the Garrick Club for a reference to Thackeray which he wrote for a paper called *Town Talk* in 1858, Thackeray having made a formal complaint to the committee. And nearly thirty years afterwards Yates was imprisoned for libelling Lord Lonsdale in *The World*. Another far less discreet gossiper, the late James Davis, suffered a similar fate. Davis was a very remarkable man who, under the pen-name of "Owen Hall," wrote many successful musical comedies, and, among other things, was the uncle of Mr. Gilbert Frankau.

If the gossipers of the mid-Victorian times were less discreet than they are to-day, they were discretion itself compared with their predecessors. In *The World* in 1874 I have found a delicate reference to the London correspondent of a Scottish newspaper, of whom it is said that "he has inherited the scurrility without the literary power of its first editor." But this is only mild "Eatanswill" and far less shocking to the modern mind, with its respect for dignitaries, than the remark in *The Morning Post* in 1800: "All Princesses except Princess Amelia were remarkably well-dressed on Wednesday. Princess Amelia was loaded." It is to be hoped that the epithet did not have its present-day vulgar significance. Nowadays, too, when divorce cases are no longer reported, it is amusing to read in *The Morning Post* of the same year: "There can be no objection to the Divorce Bill provided that peeping be made a capital offence for chambermaids."

There is a typical example of the Society gossip of the end of the eighteenth century in Jane Austen's "Mansfield Park": "It was with infinite concern the newspaper had to announce to the world a matrimonial fracas in the family of Mr. R. of Wimpole Street; the beautiful Mrs. R., whose name had not long been enrolled in the lists of Hymen and who had promised to become so brilliant a leader in the fashionable world, having quitted her husband's roof with the well-known and captivating Mr. C., the intimate friend and associate of Mr. R., and it was not known even to the editor of the paper whither they were gone."

In recent years America has copied the English gossip pages, with, of course, considerably added pungency, not to say considerably added punch. It is said that the writer of "Gossip from Broadway," which is syndicated throughout the Hearst Press, is the best-paid gossip writer in the world. His salary is many times more than that of an English Prime Minister, and almost equal to that of a Hollywood film star.

THE ROMANCE OF A BULB-SQUEEZER

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

Illustrated by
CHARLES CROMBIE

SOMEBODY had left a copy of an illustrated weekly paper in the bar-parlour of the Anglers' Rest; and, glancing through it, I came upon the ninth full-page photograph of a celebrated musical comedy actress that I had seen since the preceding Wednesday. This one showed her looking archly over her shoulder with a rose between her teeth, and I flung the periodical from me with a stifled cry.

"Tut, tut!" said Mr. Mulliner, reprovingly. "You must not allow these things to affect you so deeply. Remember, it is not actresses' photographs that matter, but the courage which we bring to them."

He sipped his hot Scotch.

I wonder if you have ever reflected, he said, gravely, what life must be like for the men whose trade it is to make these pictures? Statistics show that the two classes of the community which least often marry are milkmen and fashionable photographers—milkmen because they see women too early in the morning, and fashionable photographers because their days are spent in an atmosphere of feminine loveliness so monotonous that they become surfeited and morose. I know of none of the world's workers whom I pity more sincerely than the fashionable photographer; and yet—by one of those strokes of irony which make the thoughtful man waver between sardonic laughter and sympathetic tears—it is the ambition of every youngster who enters the profession some day to become one.

At the outset of his career, you see, a young photographer is sorely oppressed by human gargoyles: and gradually this begins to prey upon his nerves.

"Why is it," I remember my cousin Clarence saying, after he had been about a year in the business, "that all these misfits want to be photographed? Why do men with faces which you would have thought they would be anxious to hush up wish to be strewn about the country on what-nots and in albums? I started out full of ardour and enthusiasm, and my eager soul is being crushed. This morning the Mayor of Tooting East came to make an appointment. He is coming to-morrow afternoon to be taken in his cocked hat and robes of office; and there is absolutely no excuse for a man with a face like that perpetuating his features. I wish to goodness I was one of those fellows who only take camera-portraits of beautiful women."

His dream was to come true sooner than he had imagined. Within a week the great test-case of Biggs *v.* Mulliner had raised my cousin Clarence from an obscure studio in West Kensington to the position of London's most famous photographer.

You possibly remember the case? The events that led up to it were, briefly, as follows:—

Jno. Horatio Biggs, O.B.E., the newly-elected Mayor of Tooting East, alighted from a cab at the door of Clarence Mulliner's studio at four-ten on the afternoon of June the seventeenth. At four-eleven he went in. And at four-sixteen and a half he was observed shooting out of a first-floor window, vigorously assisted by my cousin, who was prodding him in the seat of the trousers with the sharp end of a photographic tripod. Those who were in a position to see stated that Clarence's face was distorted by a fury scarcely human.

Naturally the matter could not be expected to rest there. A week later the

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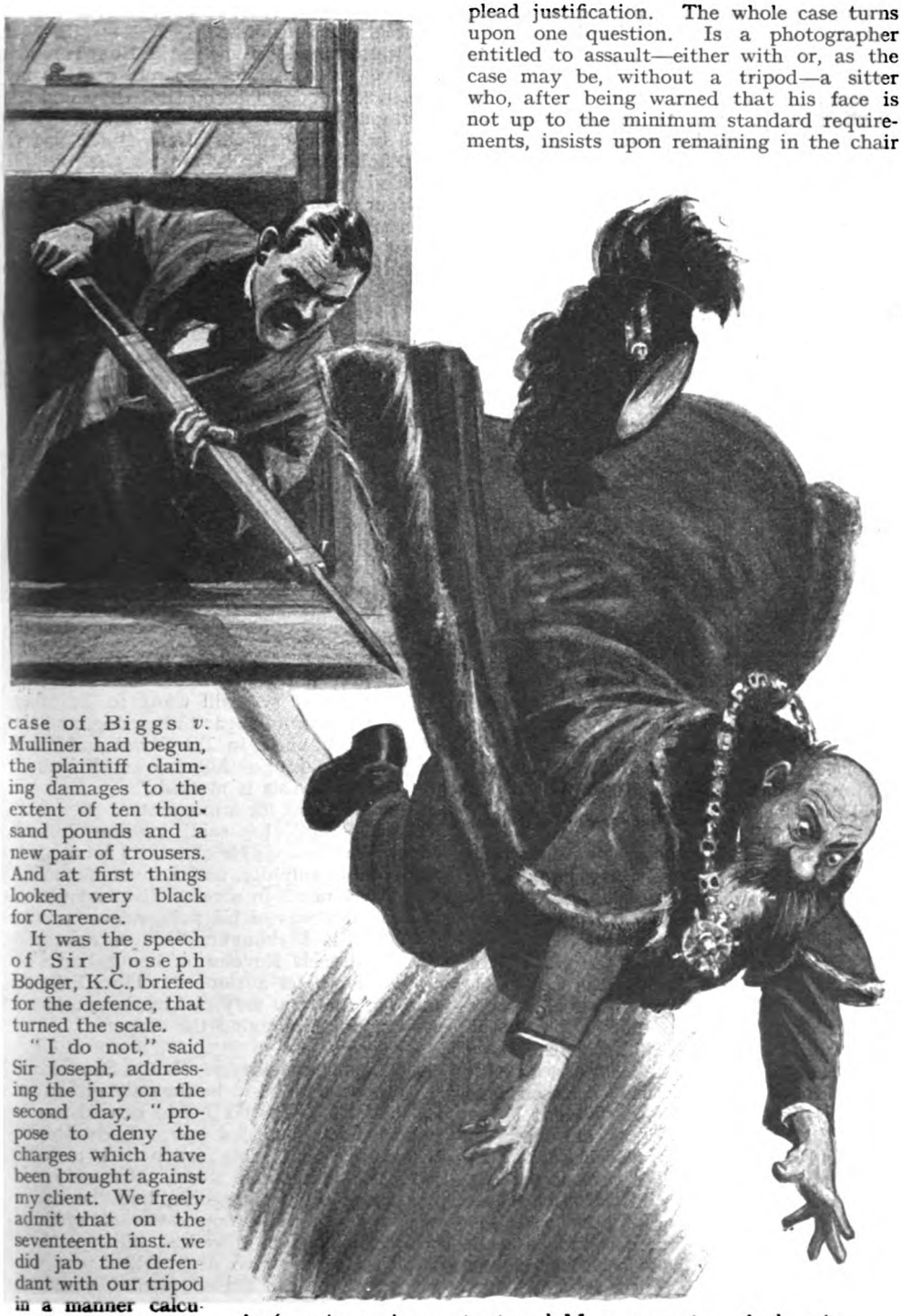


plead justification. The whole case turns upon one question. Is a photographer entitled to assault—either with or, as the case may be, without a tripod—a sitter who, after being warned that his face is not up to the minimum standard requirements, insists upon remaining in the chair

case of Biggs *v.* Mulliner had begun, the plaintiff claiming damages to the extent of ten thousand pounds and a new pair of trousers. And at first things looked very black for Clarence.

It was the speech of Sir Joseph Bodger, K.C., briefed for the defence, that turned the scale.

"I do not," said Sir Joseph, addressing the jury on the second day, "propose to deny the charges which have been brought against my client. We freely admit that on the seventeenth inst. we did jab the defendant with our tripod in a manner calculated to cause alarm and despondency. But, gentlemen, we

At four-eleven the newly-elected Mayor went in. And at four-sixteen and a half he was observed shooting out of a first-floor window.

and moistening the lips with the tip of the tongue ? Gentlemen, I say Yes !

" Unless you decide in favour of my client, gentlemen of the jury, photographers—debarred by law from the privilege of rejecting sitters—will be at the mercy of anyone who comes along with the price of a dozen photographs in his pocket. You have seen the plaintiff, Biggs. You have noted his broad, slab-like face, intolerable to any man of refinement and sensibility. You have observed his walrus moustache, his double chin, his protruding eyes. Take another look at him, and then tell me if my client was not justified in chasing him with a tripod out of that sacred temple of Art and Beauty, his studio.

" Gentlemen, I have finished. I leave my client's fate in your hands with every confidence that you will return the only verdict that can conceivably issue from twelve men of your obvious intelligence, your manifest sympathy, and your superb breadth of vision."

Of course, after that there was nothing to it. The jury decided in Clarence's favour without leaving the box ; and the crowd waiting outside to hear the verdict carried him shoulder-high to his house, refusing to disperse until he had made a speech and sung Photographers never, never, never shall be slaves. And next morning every paper in England came out with a leading article commending him for having so courageously established, as it had not been established since the days of Magna Charta, the fundamental principle of the Liberty of the Subject.

THE effect of this publicity on Clarence's fortunes was naturally stupendous. He had become in a flash the best-known photographer in the United Kingdom, and was now in a position to realize that vision which he had had of taking the pictures of none but the beaming and the beautiful. Every day the loveliest ornaments of Society and the Stage flocked to his studio ; and it was with the utmost astonishment, therefore, that, calling upon him one morning on my return to England after an absence of two years in the East, I learned that Fame and Wealth had not brought him happiness.

I found him sitting moodily in his studio, staring with dull eyes at a camera-portrait of a well-known actress in a bathing-suit. He looked up listlessly as I entered.

" Clarence ! " I cried, shocked at his appearance, for there were hard lines about his mouth and wrinkles on a forehead that once had been smooth as alabaster. " What is wrong ? "

" Everything," he replied. " I'm fed up."

" What with ? "

" Life. Beautiful women. This beastly photography business."

I was amazed. Even in the East rumours of his success had reached me, and on my return to London I found that they had not been exaggerated. In every photographers' club in the Metropolis, from the Negative and Solution in Pall Mall to the humble public-houses frequented by the men who do your pictures while you wait on the sands at seaside resorts, he was being freely spoken of as the logical successor to the Presidency of the Amalgamated Guild of Bulb-Squeezers.

" I can't stick it much longer," said Clarence, tearing the camera-portrait into a dozen pieces with a dry sob and burying his face in his hands. " Actresses nursing their dolls ! Countesses simpering over kittens ! Film stars among their books ! In ten minutes I go to catch a train at Waterloo. I have been sent for by the Duchess of Hampshire to take some studies of Lady Monica Southbourne in the castle grounds."

A shudder ran through him. I patted him on the shoulder. I understood now.

" She has the most brilliant smile in England," he whispered.

" Come, come ! "

" Coy yet roguish, they tell me."

" It may not be true."

" And I bet she will want to be taken offering a lump of sugar to her dog, and the picture will appear in *The Sketch* and *Tatler* as ' Lady Monica Southbourne and Friend.' "

" Clarence, this is morbid."

He was silent for a moment.

" Ah, well," he said, pulling himself together with a visible effort, " I have made my sodium sulphite, and I must lie in it."

I saw him off in a cab. The last view I had of him was of his pale, drawn profile. He looked, I thought, like an aristocrat of the French Revolution being borne off to his doom on a tumbril. How little he guessed that the only girl in the world lay waiting for him round the corner.

NO, you are wrong. Lady Monica did not turn out to be the only girl in the world. If what I said caused you to expect that, I misled you. Lady Monica proved to be all his fancy had pictured her. In fact, even more. Not only was her smile coy yet roguish, but she had a sort of coquettish droop of the left eyelid of which no one had warned him. And, in addition to her two dogs, which she was portrayed in the act of feeding with two lumps of sugar, she possessed a totally unforeseen pet monkey, of which he was compelled to take no fewer than eleven studies.

It was in a traffic jam that he first observed the girl.

No, it was not Lady Monica who captured Clarence's heart, but a girl in a taxi whom he met on his way to the station.

It was in a traffic jam at the top of Whitehall that he first observed this girl. His cab had become becalmed in a sea of omnibuses; and, chancing to look to the right, he perceived within a few feet of him another taxi, which had been heading for Trafalgar Square. There was a face at its window. It turned towards him, and their eyes met.

To most men it would have seemed an unattractive face. To Clarence, surfeited with the coy, the beaming, and the delicately-chiselled, it was the most wonderful thing he had ever looked at. All his life, he felt, he had been searching for something on these lines. That snub nose—those freckles—that breadth of cheek-bone—the squareness of that chin. And not a dimple in sight. He told me afterwards that his only feeling at first was one of incredulity. He had not believed that the world contained women like this. And then the traffic jam loosened up and he was carried away.

It was as he was passing the Houses of Parliament that the realization came to him that the strange bubbly sensation that seemed to start from just above the lower left side-pocket of his waistcoat was not, as he had at first supposed, dyspepsia, but love. Yes, love had come at long last to Clarence Mulliner; and for all the good it was likely to do him, he reflected bitterly, it might just as well have been the dyspepsia for which he had mistaken it. He loved a girl whom he would probably never see again. He did not know her name or where she lived or anything about her. All he knew was that he would cherish her image in his heart for ever, and that the thought of going on with the old dreary round of photographing lovely women with coy yet roguish smiles was almost more than he could bear.

HOWEVER, custom is strong; and a man who has once allowed the bulb-squeezing habit to get a grip of him cannot cast it off in a moment. Next day Clarence was back in his studio, diving into the velvet nose-bag as of yore and telling peeresses to watch the little birdie just as if nothing had happened. And if there was now a strange, haunting look of pain in his eyes, nobody objected to that. Indeed, inasmuch as the grief which gnawed at his heart had the effect of deepening and mellowing his camera-side manner to an almost sacerdotal unctuousness, his private sorrows actually helped his professional prestige. Women told one another that being photographed by Clarence Mulliner was like undergoing some wonderful spiritual experience in a noble cathedral; and his appointment-book became fuller than ever.

So great now was his reputation that to anyone who had had the privilege of being taken by him, either full face or in profile, the doors of Society opened automatically. It was whispered that his name was to appear in the next Birthday Honours List; and at the annual banquet of the Amalgamated Bulb-Squeezers, when Sir Godfrey Stooge, the retiring President, in proposing his health concluded a glowingly eulogistic speech with the words "Gentlemen, I give you my destined successor, Mulliner the Liberator!" five hundred frantic photographers almost shivered the glasses on the table with their applause.

And yet he was not happy. He had lost the only girl he had ever loved, and without her what was Fame? What was Affluence? What were the Highest Honours in the Land?

These were the questions he was asking himself one night as he sat in his library, sombrely sipping a final whisky-and-soda before retiring. He had asked them once and was going to ask them again, when he was interrupted by the sound of someone ringing at the front-door bell.

He rose, surprised. It was late for callers. The domestic staff had gone to bed, so he went to the door and opened it. A shadowy figure was standing on the steps.

"Mr. Mulliner?"

"I am Mr. Mulliner."

The man stepped past him into the hall. And, as he did so, Clarence saw that he was wearing over the upper half of his face a black velvet mask.

"I must apologize for hiding my face, Mr. Mulliner," the visitor said, as Clarence led him to the library.

"Not at all," replied Clarence, courteously. "No doubt it is all for the best."

"Indeed?" said the other, with a touch of asperity. "If you really want to know, I am probably as handsome a man as there is in London. But my mission is one of such extraordinary secrecy that I dare not run the risk of being recognized." He paused, and Clarence saw his eyes glint through the holes in the mask as he directed a rapid gaze into each corner of the library. "Mr. Mulliner, have you any acquaintance with the ramifications of international secret politics?"

"I have."

"And you are a patriot?"

"I am."

"Then I can speak freely. No doubt you are aware, Mr. Mulliner, that for some time past this country and a certain rival Power have been competing for the friendship and alliance of a certain other Power?"

"No," said Clarence, "they didn't tell me that."

"Such is the case. And the President of this Power——"

"Which one?"

"The second one."

"Call it B."

"The President of Power B. is now in London. He arrived incognito, travelling under the assumed name of J. J. Shubert: and the representatives of Power A., to the best of our knowledge, are not yet aware of his presence. This gives us just the few hours necessary to clinch this treaty with Power B. before Power A. can interfere. I ought to tell you, Mr. Mulliner, that if Power B. forms an alliance with this country, the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon race will be secured for hundreds of years. Whereas if Power A. gets hold of Power B., civilization will be thrown into the melting-pot. In the eyes of all Europe—and when I say all Europe I refer particularly to Powers C., D., and E.—this nation would sink to the rank of a fourth-class Power."

"Call it Power F.," said Clarence.

"It rests with you, Mr. Mulliner, to save England."

"Great Britain," corrected Clarence. He was half Scotch on his mother's side. "But how? What can I do about it?"

"The position is this. The President of Power B. has an overwhelming desire to have his photograph taken by Clarence Mulliner. Consent to take it, and our difficulties will be at an end. Overcome with gratitude, he will sign the treaty, and the Anglo-Saxon race will be safe."

CLARENCE did not hesitate. Apart from the natural gratification of feeling that he was doing the Anglo-Saxon race a bit of good, business was business; and if the President took a dozen of the

large size finished in silver wash it would mean a nice profit.

"I shall be delighted," he said.

"Your patriotism," said the visitor, "will not go unrewarded. It will be gratefully noted in the Very Highest Circles."

Clarence reached for his appointment-book.

"Now, let me see. Wednesday?—No, I'm full up Wednesday. Thursday?—No. Suppose the President looks in at my studio between four and five on Friday?"

The visitor uttered a gasp.

"Good heavens, Mr. Mulliner," he exclaimed, "surely you do not imagine that, with the vast issues at stake, these things can be done openly and in daylight? If the devils in the pay of Power A. were to learn that the President intended to have his photograph taken by you, I would not give a straw for your chances of living an hour."

"Then what do you suggest?"

"You must accompany me now to the President's suite at the Milan Hotel. We shall travel in a closed car, and God send that these fiends did not recognize me as I came here. If they did, we shall never reach that car alive. Have you by any chance, while we have been talking, heard the hoot of an owl?"

"No," said Clarence. "No owls."

"Then perhaps they are nowhere near. The fiends always imitate the hoot of an owl."

"A thing," said Clarence, "which I tried to do when I was a small boy and never seemed able to manage. The popular idea that owls say 'Tu-whit, tu-whoo' is all wrong. The actual noise they make is something far more difficult and complex, and it was beyond me."

"Quite so." The visitor looked at his watch. "However, absorbing as these reminiscences of your boyhood days are, time is flying. Shall we be making a start?"

"Certainly."

"Then follow me."

It appeared to be holiday-time for fiends, or else the night-shift had not yet come on, for they reached the car without being molested. Clarence stepped in, and his masked visitor, after a keen look up and down the street, followed him.

"Talking of my boyhood——" began Clarence.

The sentence was never completed. A soft, wet pad was pressed over his nostrils: the air became a-reek with the sickly fumes of chloroform: and Clarence knew no more.

WHEN he came to, he was no longer in the car. He found himself lying on a bed in a room in a strange house. It was a medium-sized room with scarlet wall-paper, simply furnished with a wash-hand stand, a chest of drawers, two cane-bottomed chairs, and a "God Bless Our Home" motto framed in oak. He was conscious of a severe headache; and was about to rise and make for the water-bottle on the wash-stand when, to his consternation, he discovered that his arms and legs were shackled with stout cord.

As a family, the Mulliners have always been noted for their reckless courage; and Clarence was no exception to the rule. But for an instant his heart undeniably beat a little faster. He saw now that his masked visitor had tricked him. Instead of being a representative of His Majesty's Diplomatic Service (a most respectable class of men), he had really been all along a fiend in the pay of Power A.

No doubt he and his vile associates were even now chuckling at the ease with which their victim had been duped. Clarence gritted his teeth, and struggled vainly to loose the knots which secured his wrists. He had fallen back exhausted when he heard the sound of a key turning, and the door opened. Somebody crossed the room and stood by the bed, looking down on him.

The new-comer was a stout man with a complexion that matched the wall-paper. He was puffing slightly, as if he had found the stairs trying. He had broad, slab-like features; and his face was split in the middle by a walrus moustache. Somewhere and in some place, Clarence was convinced, he had seen this man before.

And then it all came back to him. An open window with a pleasant summer breeze blowing in; a stout man in a cocked hat trying to climb through this window; and he, Clarence, doing his best to help him with the sharp end of a tripod. It was Jno. Horatio Biggs, the Mayor of Tooting East.

A shudder of loathing ran through Clarence.

"Traitor!" he cried.

"Eh?" said the Mayor.

"If anybody had told me that a son of Tooting, nursed in the keen air of freedom which blows across the Common, would sell himself for gold to the enemies of his country, I would never have believed it. Well, you may tell your employers——"

"What employers?"

"Power A."

"Oh, that?" said the Mayor. "I am afraid my secretary, whom I instructed to bring you to this house, was obliged to romance a little in order to ensure your

accompanying him, Mr. Mulliner. All that about Power A. and Power B. was just his little joke. If you want to know why you were brought here——"

Clarence uttered a low groan.

"I have guessed your ghastly object, you ghastly object," he said quietly. "You want me to photograph you."

The Mayor shook his head.

"Not myself. I realize that that can never be. My daughter."

"Your daughter?"

"My daughter."

"Does she take after you?"

"People tell me there is a resemblance."

"I refuse," said Clarence.

"Think well, Mr. Mulliner."

"I have done all the thinking that is necessary. England—or, rather, Great Britain—looks to me to photograph only her fairest and loveliest; and though, as a man, I admit that I loathe beautiful women, as a photographer I have a duty to consider that is higher than any personal feelings. History has yet to record an instance of a photographer playing his country false, and Clarence Mulliner is not the man to supply the first one. I decline your offer."

"I wasn't looking on it exactly as an offer," said the Mayor, thoughtfully. "More as a command, if you get my meaning."

"You imagine that you can bend a lens-artist to your will and make him false to his professional reputation?"

"I was thinking of having a try."

"Do you realize that, if my incarceration here were known, ten thousand photographers would tear this house brick from brick and you limb from limb?"

"But it isn't," the Mayor pointed out. "And that, if you follow me, is the whole point. You came here by night in a closed car. You could stay here for the rest of your life, and no one would be any the wiser. I really think you had better reconsider, Mr. Mulliner."

"You have had my answer."

"Well, I'll leave you to think it over. Dinner will be served at seven-thirty. Don't bother to dress."

AT half-past seven precisely the door opened again and the Mayor reappeared, followed by a butler bearing on a silver salver a glass of water and a small slice of bread. Pride urged Clarence to reject the refreshment, but hunger overcame pride. He swallowed the bread which the butler offered him in small bits in a spoon, and drank the water.

"At what hour would the gentleman desire breakfast, sir?" asked the butler.

"Now," said Clarence, for his appetite, always healthy, seemed to have been sharpened by the trials which he had undergone.

"Let us say nine o'clock," suggested the Mayor. "Put aside another slice of that bread, Meadowes. And no doubt Mr. Mulliner would enjoy a glass of this excellent water."

FOR perhaps half an hour after his host had left him, Clarence's mind was obsessed to the exclusion of all other thoughts by a vision of the dinner he would have liked to be enjoying. All we Mulliners have been good trenchermen, and to put a bit of bread into it after it had been unoccupied for a whole day was to offer to Clarence's stomach an insult which it resented with an indescribable bitterness. Clarence's only emotion for some considerable time, then, was that of hunger. His thoughts centred themselves on food. And it was to this fact, oddly enough, that he owed his release.

For, as he lay there in a sort of delirium, picturing himself getting outside a medium-cooked steak smothered in onions, with grilled tomatoes and floury potatoes on the side, it was suddenly borne in upon him that this steak did not taste quite so good as other steaks which he had eaten in the past. It was tough, and lacked juiciness. It tasted just like rope.

And then, his mind clearing, he saw that it actually was rope. Carried away by the anguish of hunger, he had been chewing the cord which bound his hands; and he now discovered that he had bitten into it quite deeply.

A sudden flood of hope poured over Clarence Mulliner. Carrying on at this rate, he perceived, he would be able ere long to free himself. It only needed a little imagination. After a brief interval to rest his aching jaws, he put himself deliberately into that state of relaxation which is recommended by the apostles of Suggestion.

"I am entering the dining-room of my club," murmured Clarence. "I am sitting down. The waiter is handing me the bill of fare. I have selected roast duck with green peas and new potatoes, lamb cutlets with brussels sprouts, fricassee of chicken, porterhouse steak, boiled beef and carrots, leg of mutton, haunch of mutton, mutton chops, curried mutton, veal, kidneys sauté, spaghetti Caruso, and eggs and bacon, fried on both sides. The waiter is now bringing my order. I have taken up my knife and fork. I am beginning to eat."

And, murmuring a brief grace, Clarence flung himself on the rope and set to.

Twenty minutes later he was hobbling

about the room, restoring the circulation to his cramped limbs.

Just as he had succeeded in getting himself nicely limbered up, he heard the key turning in the door.

Clarence crouched for the spring. The room was quite dark now, and he was glad of it, for darkness well fitted the work which lay before him. His plans, conceived on the spur of the moment, were necessarily

Pride urged Clarence to reject the refreshment, but hunger overcame pride.

sketchy, but they included jumping on the Mayor's shoulders and pulling his head off. After that, no doubt, other modes of self-expression would suggest themselves.

The door opened. Clarence made his leap. And he was just about to start on the programme as arranged, when he discovered with a shock of horror that this was no O.B.E. that he was being rough with, but a woman. And no photographer worthy of the name will ever lay a hand upon a woman, save to raise her chin and tilt it a little more to the left.

"I beg your pardon!" he cried.

Don't mention it," said his visitor, in a low voice. "I hope I didn't disturb you."

"Not at all," said Clarence

There was a pause.

"Rotten weather," said Clarence, feeling that it was for him, as the male member of the sketch, to keep the conversation going.

"Yes, isn't it?"

"A lot of rain we've had this summer."

"Yes. It seems to get worse every year."

"Doesn't it?"

"So bad for tennis."

"And cricket."

"And polo."

"And garden parties."

"I hate rain."

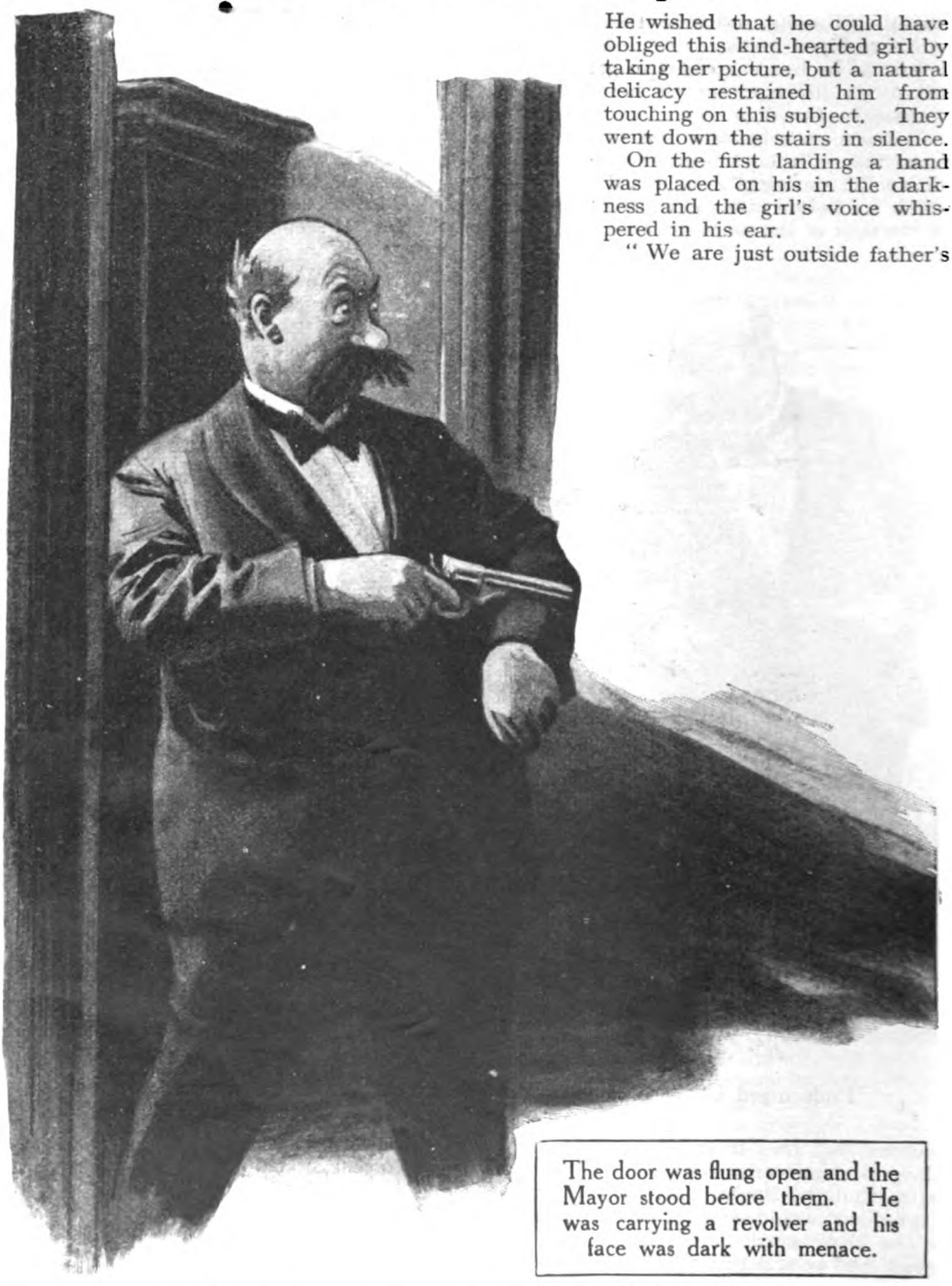
"So do I."

Of course, we may have a fine August."

Yes, there's always that."

The ice was broken, and the girl seemed to become more at her ease.

I came to let you out," she said. I must apologize for my father. He loves me foolishly and has no scruples where my happiness is concerned He has always



The door was flung open and the Mayor stood before them. He was carrying a revolver and his face was dark with menace.

yearned to have me photographed by you, but I cannot consent to allow a photographer to be coerced into abandoning his principles. If you will follow me, I will let you out by the front door."

"It's awfully good of you," said Clarence, awkwardly. As any man of nice sentiment would have been, he was embarrassed. He wished that he could have obliged this kind-hearted girl by taking her picture, but a natural delicacy restrained him from touching on this subject. They went down the stairs in silence.

On the first landing a hand was placed on his in the darkness and the girl's voice whispered in his ear.

"We are just outside father's study," he heard her say. "We must be as quiet as mice."

"As what?" said Clarence.

"Mice."

"Oh, rather," said Clarence, and immediately bumped into what appeared to be a pedestal of some sort.

These pedestals usually have vases on

top of them, and it was revealed to Clarence a moment later that this one was no exception. There was a noise like ten simultaneous dinner-services coming apart in the hands of ten simultaneous parlour-maids; and then the door was flung open, the landing became flooded with light, and the Mayor of Tooting East stood before them. He was carrying a revolver and his face was dark with menace.

"Ha!" said the Mayor.

"Ever since that day I saw you in the cab I have been scouring London for you. To think that I have found you at last!"

"This is a pretty state of affairs," said the Mayor, breathing on the barrel of his revolver and polishing it on the sleeve of his coat. "My daughter helping the foe of her family to fly——"

"Flee, father," corrected the girl, faintly.

But Clarence was paying no attention to him. He was staring open-mouthed at the girl. She had shrunk back against the wall, and the light fell full upon her.

"You!" cried Clarence.

"This——" began the Mayor.

"You! At last!"

"This is a pretty——"

"Am I dreaming?"

"This is a pretty state of af——"

"Flee or fly—this is no time for arguing about insects. Let me tell you——"

Clarence interrupted him indignantly.

"What do you mean," he said, "by telling me that she took after you?"

"She does."

"She does not. She is the loveliest girl in the world, while you look like Lon Chaney made up for something. See for yourself." Clarence led them to the large

mirror at the head of the stairs. 'Your face—if you can call it that—is one of those beastly blobby squashy sort of faces——"

"Here!" said the Mayor.

"——whereas hers is simply divine. Your eyes are bulbous and prawn-like——"

"Hey!" said the Mayor.

"——while hers are sweet and soft and intelligent. Your ears——"

"Yes, yes," said the Mayor, petulantly. "Some other time, some other time. Then am I to take it, Mr. Mulliner——"

"Call me Clarence."

"I refuse to call you Clarence."

"You will have to very shortly, when I am your son-in-law."

The girl uttered a cry. The Mayor uttered a louder cry.

"My son-in-law!"

"That," said Clarence, firmly, "is what I intend to be—and speedily." He turned to the girl. "I am a man of volcanic passions, and now that love has come to me there is no power in heaven or earth that can keep me from the object of my love. It will be my never-ceasing task—er——"

"Gladys," prompted the girl.

"Thank you. It will be my never-ceasing task, Gladys, to strive daily to make you return that love——"

"You need not strive, Clarence," she whispered, softly. "It is already returned."

Clarence reeled.

"Already?" he gasped.

"I have loved you since I saw you in that cab. When we were torn asunder, I felt quite faint."

"So did I. I was in a daze. I tipped my cabman at Waterloo three half-crowns. I was aflame with love."

"I can hardly believe it."

"Nor could I, when I found out. I thought it was threepence. And ever since that day——"

The Mayor coughed.

"Then am I to take it—er—Clarence," he said, "that your objections to photographing my daughter are removed?"

Clarence laughed happily.

"Listen," he said, "and I'll show you the sort of son-in-law I am. Ruin my professional reputation though it may, I will take a photograph of you, too!"

"Me!"

"Absolutely. Standing beside her with the tips of your fingers on her shoulder. And what's more, you can wear your cocked hat."

Tears had begun to trickle down the Mayor's cheeks.

"My boy!" he sobbed, brokenly. "My boy!"

AND so happiness came to Clarence Mulliner at last. He never became President of the Bulb-Squeezers, for he retired from business the next day, declaring that the hand that had snapped the shutter when taking the photograph of his dear wife should never snap it again for sordid profit. The wedding, which took place some six weeks later, was attended by almost everybody of any note in Society or on the Stage; and was the first occasion on which a bride and bridegroom had ever walked out of church beneath an arch of crossed tripods.

Next Month:

A NEW

SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY:

"The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place"

By

A. CONAN DOYLE

A Sherlock Holmes Competition

Set by A. CONAN DOYLE

£100 Cash Prize and 100 Autographed Copies of "Memories and Adventures"

In the following article Sir A. Conan Doyle makes the interesting announcement that from the forty-four Sherlock Holmes stories already published in book form in four volumes he has selected the twelve stories which he considers the best, and he now invites readers to do likewise. A sealed copy of this list is in the Editor's possession, and a prize of £100 and an autographed copy of Sir A. Conan Doyle's "Memories and Adventures" is offered to the sender of the coupon which coincides most nearly with this list. In the event of ties the prize of £100 will be divided. The actual order of the stories will not be regarded. Autographed copies of "Memories and Adventures" will also be awarded to 100 readers submitting the next nearly correct coupons.

An illustration from each of the stories is here given. Each illustration being numbered, competitors need only state on the coupon (which will be found on page 68 of the advertisement section) the numbers of the stories selected.

The four volumes of stories, "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes," "The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes," "The Return of Sherlock Holmes," and "His Last Bow," are published by Messrs. John Murray in two-shilling editions and may be obtained from all booksellers.

MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES TO HIS READERS

By A. CONAN DOYLE

I FEAR that Mr. Sherlock Holmes may become like one of those popular tenors who, having outlived their time, are still tempted to make repeated farewell bows to their indulgent audiences. This must cease and he must go the way of all flesh, material or imaginary. One likes to think that there is some fantastic limbo for the children of imagination, some strange, impossible place where the beaux of Fielding may still make love to the belles of Richardson, where Scott's heroes still may strut, Dickens's delightful Cockneys still raise a laugh, and Thackeray's worldlings continue to carry on their reprehensible careers. Perhaps in some humble corner of such a Valhalla, Sherlock and his Watson may for a time find a place, while some more astute sleuth with some even less astute comrade may fill the stage which they have vacated.

His career has been a long one—though it is possible to exaggerate it.

1.—A SCANDAL IN BOHEMIA.

2.—THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE.

3.—A CASE OF IDENTITY.

4.—THE BOSCOMBE VALLEY MYSTERY.

5.—THE FIVE ORANGE PIPS.

6.—THE MAN WITH THE TWISTED LIP.

Decrepit gentlemen who approach me and declare that his adventures formed the reading of their boyhood do not meet the response from me which they seem to expect. One is not anxious to have one's personal dates handled so unkindly. As a matter of cold fact, Holmes made his *début* in "A Study in Scarlet" and in "The Sign of Four," two small booklets which appeared between 1887 and 1889. It was in 1891 that "A Scandal in Bohemia," the first of the long series of short stories, appeared in THE STRAND MAGAZINE. The public seemed appreciative and desirous of more, so that from that date, thirty-six years ago, they have been produced in a broken series which now contains no fewer than fifty-six stories, including "The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place," to appear in next month's STRAND MAGAZINE. These have been re-published in "The Adventures," "The Memoirs," "The Return," and "His Last Bow," and there remain twelve published during the last few years which Sir John Murray is about to produce under the title of "The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes." He began his adventures in the very heart of the later Victorian Era, carried it through

7.—THE BLUE CARBUNCLE.

8.—THE SPECKLED BAND.

9.—THE ENGINEER'S THUMB.

10.—THE NOBLE BACHELOR.

11.—THE BERYL CORONET

12 —THE COPPER BEECHES.

13.—SILVER BLAZE.

14.—THE CARDBOARD BOX.

15.—THE YELLOW FACE.

16.—THE STOCK-BROKER'S CLERK.

17.—THE "GLORIA SCOTT."

18.—THE MUSGRAVE RITUAL.

the all-too-short reign of Edward, and has managed to hold his own little niche even in these feverish days. Thus it would be true to say that those who first read of him as young men have lived to see their own grown-up children following the same adventures in the same magazine. It is a striking example of the patience and loyalty of the British public.

I had fully determined at the conclusion of "The Memoirs" to bring Holmes to an end, as I felt that my literary energies should not be directed too much into one channel. That pale, clear-cut face and loose-limbed figure were taking up an undue share of my imagination. I did the deed, but, fortunately, no coroner had pronounced upon the remains, and so, after a long interval, it was not difficult for me to respond to the flattering demand and to explain my rash act away. I have never regretted it, for I have not in actual practice found that these lighter sketches have prevented me from exploring and finding my limitations in such varied branches of literature as history, poetry, historical novels, psychic research, and the drama. Had Holmes never existed I could not have

19.—THE REIGATE SQUIRE.

20.—THE CROOKED MAN.

21.—THE RESIDENT PATIENT.

22.—THE GREEK INTERPRETER.

23.—THE NAVAL TREATY.

24.—THE FINAL PROBLEM.

25.—THE EMPTY HOUSE.

26.—THE NORWOOD BUILDER.

27.—THE DANCING MEN.

28.—THE SOLITARY CYCLIST.

29.—THE PRIORY SCHOOL.

30.—BLACK PETER.

31.—CHARLES AUGUSTUS MILVERTON.

32.—THE SIX NAPOLEONS.

done more, though he may perhaps have stood a little in the way of the recognition of my more serious literary work.

There has been some debate as to whether the Adventures of Holmes, or the narrative powers of Watson, declined with the passage of the years. When the same string is still harped upon, however cunningly one may vary the melody, there is still the danger of monotony. The mind of the reader is less fresh and responsive, which may unjustly prejudice him against the writer. To compare great things to small, Scott in his autobiographical notes has remarked that each of Voltaire's later pamphlets was declared to be a declension from the last one, and yet when the collected works were assembled they were found to be among the most brilliant. Scott also was depreciated by critics for some of his most solid work. Therefore, with such illustrious examples before one, let me preserve the hope that he who in days to come may read my series backwards will not find that his impressions are very different from those of his neighbour who reads them forwards.

It is as a little test of the opinion of the public that I inaugurate the small competition announced on page 281. I have drawn up a list of the twelve short stories contained in the four published volumes which I consider to be the best, and I should like to know to what extent my choice agrees with that of STRAND readers. I have left my list in a sealed envelope with the Editor of THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

And so, reader, farewell to Sherlock Holmes! I thank you for your constancy, and can but hope that some return has been made in the shape of that distraction from the worries of life and stimulating change of thought which can only be found in the fairy kingdom of romance.

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

33.—THE THREE STUDENTS.

34.—THE GOLDEN PINCE-NEZ.

35.—THE MISSING THREE-QUARTER.

36.—THE ABBEY GRANGE.

(Nos. 37–44 will be found on the back of the frontispiece.)

THE EMERALD CELT

By

EDGAR JEPSON

Illustrated by
CHARLES CROMBIE

I STOOD at the window and looked down into the grimy, sweltering street, and wished to goodness I had never come to New York, and wondered how the devil I was ever going to get out of it. My hat! It was a sweltering afternoon—not an intelligentsiac or an artist's model was about; the street, for once, was empty.

Of course I could pawn my sleeve-links and cable to the family to cable my fare home, but on those lines there was nothing doing. The family had been too dashed despondent about my making a go of it in New York for me to do that. I could never go back without some money to save my face, or I should never hear the last of it from Aunt Caroline. I fingered my last quarter in my trouser-pocket and considered what would be best for my healthy appetite, which was speaking to me earnestly at the moment, before I set out for the lights of Broadway and made a final stab at Fortune. It looked to me as if it would be something in the way of grand larceny—with violence.

And then the Chinaman came running round the corner of the street.

Frightened? I give you my word, he was frightened. I've seen frightened men; and if ever a man was running from death, he was. From the height of that first-floor window I could see that his staring eyes were starting out of his head, and I guessed that the sweat on his shining face was none too warm. In the crook of his left arm he carried a bundle.

He came to a stop opposite my window and peered about the street as if he were looking for a bolt-hole. Then he saw me, and stared at me hard. Then he ran across the street, and croaked, huskily: "Catchee! Velly soft!" and swung the bundle upward, just hard enough to reach me.

I caught it softly all right. Without another word he ran on up the street and round the next corner

I stepped well back into the room. I guessed that the bundle was better out of the sight of passers-by. And when twenty seconds later I saw the passers-by, I knew I had guessed right—four long, lean Chinamen came racing round the corner, and their faces were as full of fury as the face of the first beggar had been full of fear, and they weren't nice kind faces either, not at any time, not even in repose.

I had time to see that they looked to belong to the same family and were very superior—I mean that they were nicely dressed by Wetzler or Bell—and I saw the sun gleam on the small automatic in the hand of the last of them, all ready for business, and as he passed out of sight up the street the bundle stirred on my arm.

Did I quail? I quailed. Other brave lads might have got off with a pet dog or a kitten—or even a rabbit. But not Jocelyn. No: not gentle Jocelyn. I went on quailing as I laid the bundle on the bed and pulled out the four gold pins that fastened the thick silk shawl, embroidered with birds of paradise, that was rolled five times round it, and unwrapped it. It *was* a baby!

I did a last quail and blenched. Then I looked at it closer. It was quite a nice baby—plump, and its round face was a creamy yellow, and its round head would have been a creamy yellow too, but for the dark down on it; its closed eyes slanted a little upwards; it was smiling at some dream—a Chinese baby.

Here was a go! My mind whirled a bit. What on earth was I to do with it? I couldn't keep myself—at least I was making no sort of a job of it. How was I going to keep a baby too? I stood staring at it, trying to think what to do with it with a brain that wouldn't work.

Then it opened its eyes, tremendously old and wise eyes, much older and wiser than most grown-ups' eyes, and blinked at

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me, and shut them and went to sleep again.

I had a queer feeling that it had entrusted itself to me just as the Chinaman had entrusted it to me; and I said, cheerily: "All right, comrade. We'll find a way."

But I'll be hanged if I knew how I was going to find it.

I bent down again to look at its tiny yellow toes, all curled up, and saw the pouch pinned to the shawl just under them. I unpinned it and opened it and took out of it ten fifty-dollar notes, two thousand-dollar notes, and a sheet of rice paper covered with Chinese writing.

What I said was: "Saved! Saved!"

I put the notes into my note-case and looked at the sheet of paper. If I could read it, it would be instructions, and instructions would come in handy. Then I remembered the Chinaman in the basement. I covered the comrade with the shawl—and I hoped he wouldn't wake and howl—shut the door gently and locked it, and bolted down the stairs and knocked at the Chinaman's door. He opened it himself, a stout and worthy old gentleman and sedate, and smiled at me politely.

I showed him the sheet of rice paper and what had been my last quarter and said: "A friend of mine has sent this to me to get translated for him. I'll give you this quarter if you'll do it for me."

He accepted the offer and took the paper, and read out in his pidgin but understandable way:—

Honourable and benevolent stranger, my husband, Sien Seng, is old and very sick, and my stepsons are wicked men. They will poison my baby Hsiang Kwei and me also. Save him, I pray you, and bring him up kindly. I give you the money, but when he is a man I pray you to give him the axe. If you do these things, Kuan Yin, the friend of children, will give you prosperity.

"What does 'give him the axe' mean?" I asked.

"Me no savee," said the Chinaman.

I thanked him and gave him the quarter. On my way up to my room I did some quick thinking. I'd seen those stepsons, and I felt that the neighbourhood of Washington Square was no place for comrade Kwei. It was a good thing that the heat had kept the street so empty that no one was likely to have seen me receive that bundle, but those blackguardly stepsons might catch their man and force him to tell them what he had done with it. Besides, it would soon be all over the street that I had become the owner of a Chinese baby. No: the neighbourhood was not healthy; it was me and comrade Kwei for the really busy haunts of men where an extra baby, Chinese or otherwise, is not noticed.

AND then, as I unlocked the door of my room, the great idea came. I made sure that the comrade was sleeping, then I picked up *The New York Times* and found the advertisement I had noticed when I had been looking through the jobs vacant and wanted that morning. I soon found it:—

Young English lady will act as companion or secretary for a year for passage home to England.—S. Burton, 147B, 144th Street, N.Y.

I had thought it an uncommonly sporting offer, and now I felt in my bones that this was the very young woman to help me get comrade Kwei away to Easingwold. In about three minutes I had packed everything I had left in a suit-case and rolled comrade Kwei in his shawl and was out of the house with them.

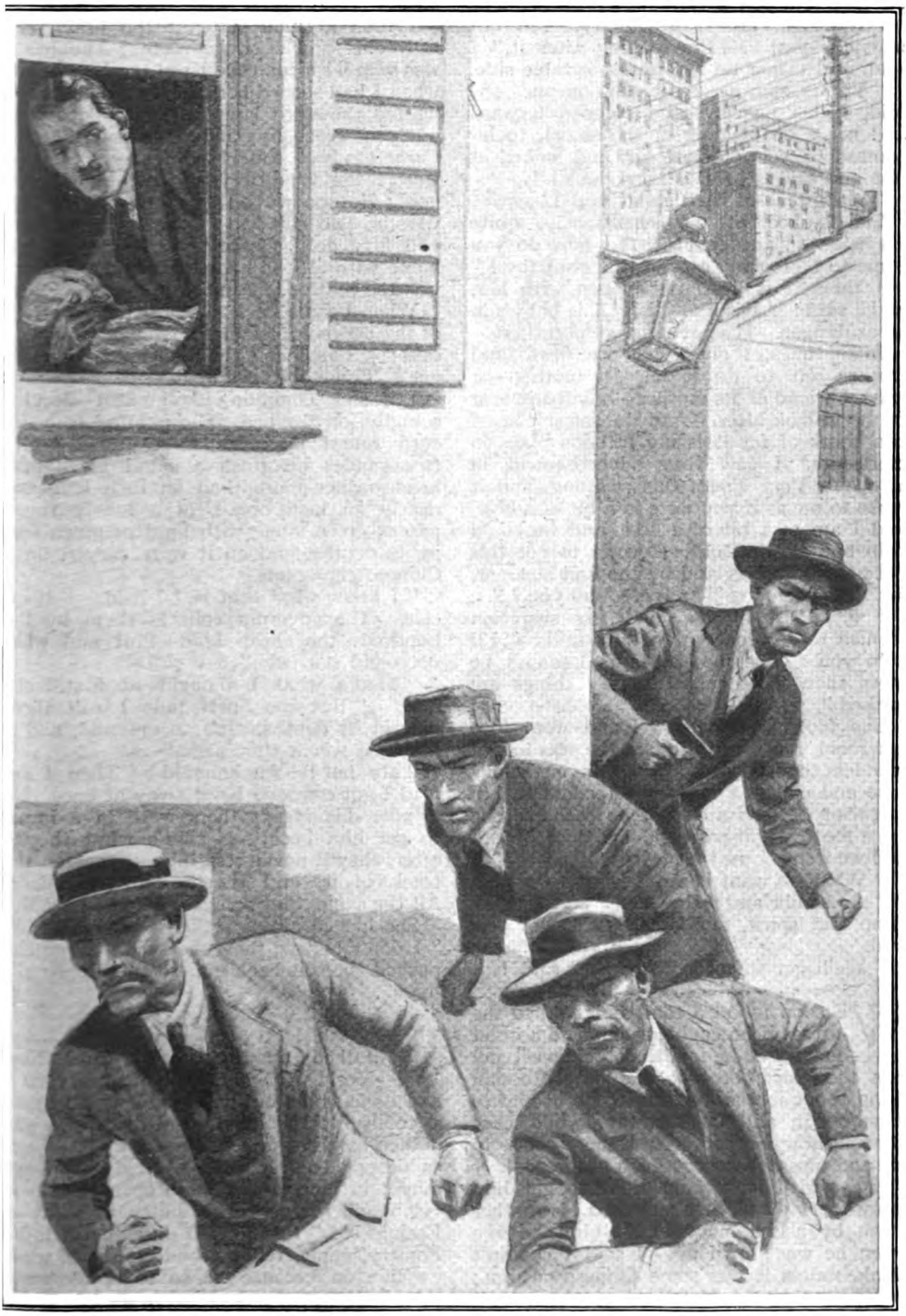
I walked down the street and took the first turning to the right, at a right angle to the line of the Chinaman's flight. I was in luck: I hadn't gone more than a couple of hundred yards when I met an empty taxi. I told the driver to drive to 147B, 144th Street. When we reached it I paid him and let him go. I wanted to lose him.

The house looked to be densely populated and it was certainly strongly scented. Carrying my suit-case and comrade Kwei, I went in. A small girl in the hall told me that Miss Burton lived on the second floor, the first door on the left, and I went upstairs and knocked at it. It was opened by an astonishingly pretty girl.

I was taken a bit unawares. I'm never quite comfortable with a pretty girl at first, not in fact till the acquaintance has ripened. Besides, I'd got it into my head that S. Burton would be a capable, matter-of-fact, rather stern, plainish young woman, sternly dressed. This one looked capable enough, but not particularly matter-of-fact or stern—rather otherwise, in fact—and she certainly wasn't sternly dressed, but smartly and prettily.

And somehow or other the thinking machine went a bit out of gear, and instead of leading up to the basic fact of comrade Kwei with a few diplomatic remarks, as I had intended, I blurted out: "Good afternoon, Miss Burton. I want a secretary who can look after a baby."

Her eyes—they were good grey eyes that looked at you uncommonly frankly—opened rather wide and she stared at me and then at the bundle, which must have looked more than a bit out of place on my



As I stepped well back into the room with the bundle, four long, lean Chinamen came racing round the corner, their faces full of fury.

arm, and said: "Who can look after a baby? Are you a widower?"

"No. Oh, no. Not exactly. I'm not married—yet. I—I'm looking after it," I said, still rather on the uncomfortable side.

"You're smothering it, you mean," she said, rather sharply, and stepped forward and made an opening in the shawl, to let comrade Kwei get more air, and looked at him and said: "But what a duck!"

"A snifter—as they go!" said I.

She looked at me suspiciously, quite suspiciously, and said: "But how do you come to be looking after a Chinese baby?"

I thought it best to be open with her, and I said: "It's like this. This baby's in great danger. It's got some stepbrothers—regular thugs, I give you my word, and they're out to do it in. Its mother—at least, a friend of its mother—handed it over to me to look after. And the safest place I can think of for it is my father's place in Yorkshire. I saw your advertisement in *The New York Times* this morning, and it looks to me as if you were in a bit of a hole, and I am in a bit of a hole, and we could help one another out. I want to get this baby away to England by the first steamer, and I want you to help me. Will you?"

She looked at me, and her suspicion seemed to go; she smiled and said: "I'll help you. Give me the lad. I sha'n't be more than three minutes. My things are packed."

She took comrade Kwei and went into her room, and, sure enough, she was out of it in less than three minutes, bringing a suit-case and comrade Kwei wrapped in a thin silk wrap better suited to the weather. She gave me the suit-case and his thick shawl, and we went down the stairs.

"What we want is a quiet hotel," said I.

"And milk and baby foods, and a spirit lamp and spirit, and a baby's bath," she said.

"We'll get them on the way," said I.

WE soon found a taxi, and I asked the driver if he could recommend a quiet hotel, and he said that the Sevastopol was the place, because the only Russian thing about it was its name. I told him to drive to it, and on the way I told Miss Burton how comrade Kwei had come to me and repeated his mother's letter.

She said I was quite right to get him away to England, but what did his mother mean by asking me to give him the axe when he was grown up. I said I couldn't think, unless it was some Chinese custom; and if it was, they'd tell us all about it at the British Museum. Then I gave her one of the fifty-dollar notes, and we stopped at a dairy and a couple of stores, and she bought comrade Kwei's food and outfit and bath.

I took a small suite at the hotel, two bedrooms and a sitting-room. The less I was seen with comrade Kwei the better, and when I had settled her and him in them and lighted the spirit lamp, I went off to book our passage to England. I found that the *Carmania* was sailing next day. Since it wasn't the time of year when people are going Europe way, I got, after a bit of a wrestle, two adjacent cabins for a hundred and fifty dollars apiece. I wanted to get home with all the money I could, for there was the matter of Aunt Caroline.

When I came back Miss Burton came out of the bedroom, looking a trifle excited, and said: "I've found the axe! And it *is* an axe! Come and look at it."

I found comrade Kwei, still sleeping soundly, on the bed. She pointed to a silk cord round his neck, then pulled gently from under his frock a small green axe-head, rather more than an inch long and nearly an inch broad, of a lovely transparent green stone with kind of green fires in its depths, and on it were carved three Chinese characters.

"I know what that is," I said. "It's a celt. The governor collects them by the hundred—the cheap kind—flint and what not—and it's jade."

"That's what I thought at first," she said. "But the finest jade hasn't those fires in its depths. It's an emerald, and it must be worth thousands."

"My hat! An emerald! Then I *am* glad I got comrade Kwei away at once. No wonder his stepbrothers were in a hurry to get him back. If that's what they're after, they'll never rest till they get on the track of it, and they're persistent lads. All the same, they're never going to get it."

She looked at me rather hard and said: "I don't believe they ever will." And she pushed the celt back under comrade Kwei's frock.

WE dined in the sitting-room, and talked about ourselves and New York. She had done exactly what I had done, come out to New York to make a small fortune and found that she was hidden by the crowd. Her family had been as despondent as mine. I told her about mine; in fact, I was quite open with her.

"You'll get very little butcher's meat at Easingwold," I said. "It doesn't run to it. Poultry, game, rabbits, and trout are what we live on because we, so to speak, grow them all. But unless a pig is killed for purposes of bacon, there's next to no butcher's meat. The governor ran the home farm himself for years; but he

couldn't make a go of it—so now it's let, and we've only cows."

"I don't mind that. I don't like butcher's meat—much."

"Wait till you have to do without it," said I.

We were drinking our coffee when there came a quiet howl from the next room, and she made a dash for comrade Kwei. About a quarter of an hour later she brought him to keep me company, and he lay on her lap and thought deeply. I had been quite right about his eyes; he looked as if he was ninety-three and knew everything. But there was nothing stand-offish about him. He'd hold on to your little finger and try to get it into his mouth, and now and then he'd smile at you affably. Then he went to sleep and was put to bed, and we went on talking till it was time for us to go to bed too.

I awoke jolly cheerful—no more making stabs at Fortune in a dry country, but hey for the land where you could buy a drink and know what you were drinking! *The New York Times* came with the breakfast, and I took a quick look at the advertisements—not those about jobs—and there it was:—

Lost. Chinese baby. Yesterday near Washington Square. $10,000 *reward, with axe. Box* 1142.

Miss Burton came in, and I read it out to her.

"Well, it's all right so far," she said. "Nobody has seen us with a Chinese baby, for no one has seen Kwei's face."

"No. But that taxi-driver saw me with a baby in a Chinese shawl, and in the neighbourhood of Washington Square. He can take them as far as your lodging. There the trail stops. But it won't be easy to keep the comrade dark on the steamer, with a lot of women about, and some of the passengers will have read this ad."

"It won't. But it's got to be done," she said.

"It has. And what we want now is a wedding ring, for I booked your passage as Mrs. S. Burton."

"Goodness! What ever would the family say?" she said. "But it was best. I suppose I had a Chinese husband."

"Comrade Wu—Wu Burton—an American citizen," I said.

After breakfast we made a bee-line for the *Carmania*, only pausing on the way to buy a red rolled-gold wedding ring. I wanted to put it on her finger, but she wouldn't let me. We lay low till the steamer started, then went on deck and found an out-of-the-way corner for our deck chairs. I found the passage much pleasanter than the passage out, for we had to stick together to stave people off comrade Kwei, and when he was awake we had to amuse him, and in the evening we danced a lot, going to her cabin every ten minutes to make sure that he was asleep. He was a good sleeper, was comrade Kwei. We always found plenty to talk about, for she had lived in the country—her father was a retired Major-General—since she was ten.

THEN, on the fourth evening, I got a jolt. We were taking a quiet stroll, with the comrade asleep on Miss Burton's arm, and stopped to look down at the second-class passengers. A steward came out of the companion-way of their saloon and glanced up at us and stopped short and stared.

It was the Chinaman who had tossed comrade Kwei up to me.

We just stared at one another. He didn't nod, and I didn't nod. Then he turned and went along the deck, leaving me uncomfortable. I had not expected to see him again and I hadn't wanted to see him again, and now that I did see him again I didn't like him. There was not nearly so much of the faithful servant about his face, in repose, as I could have wished, and I didn't like the way in which he looked at us.

"Why ever did that Chinaman stare at us like that?" said Miss Burton in a startled voice.

"It's the beggar who tossed comrade Kwei up to me," said I.

"That's a nuisance," she said, seriously.

"It is," said I. "I don't like his face, or the way he looked at us. I've got a notion, though I've precious little to go upon, that he didn't know comrade Kwei had that celt, and now he does—having seen that ad., I mean. But, mind you, I've nothing to go upon but the way he looked at us."

"And how much more do you want?" she said, and her grey eyes sparkled queerly.

"Then the trouble we took to get comrade Kwei away from New York without anyone knowing has been wasted," said I, a bit peeved. "Confound that celt! I feel in my bones we're going to have trouble about it. But we've got to keep it safe for comrade Kwei."

We went down to her cabin; she took the celt from comrade Kwei's neck and put it in a small cardboard box and wrapped it up, and I took it to the purser, and he sealed it up and put it in the ship's strong-room. We felt easier in mind about it.

We did right in losing no time about that, for when she came to dinner the next night Miss Burton told me that she was absolutely certain that while we were on deck that afternoon her cabin had been

searched; and I believe that the next afternoon mine was searched. Two or three things had not been put back exactly as I left them, and I had noticed carefully how I left them in order to know. It really did look as if my guess had been right that the Chinaman had not known about the celt when he handed over Kwei, but knew now.

I made a point of often taking a look down to the second-class deck, but I never saw him about it. But I did see two other Chinese stewards at different times, so there might be a gang of them.

This business seemed to make Miss Burton and me even friendlier—closer allies, so to speak—and I got into the way of calling her comrade Sarah, and she called me comrade Joss, for she quite saw my point that anyone who had hunted a job in New York for months would turn into a Red. But soon we dropped the comrade part.

TWO days from Southampton I saw my Chinaman again, and I saw him come out of the Marconi room. He scuttled away when he saw me, as if he would rather not have a word with me. I thought it uncommonly suspicious, and watched him go down to the second-class. Then I went into the Marconi room.

"I suppose there's a strict rule about not telling me," I said to the operator, a bright and pleasant lad. "But this is a serious business. That Chinaman is out to rob a baby, and it wants stopping, or I wouldn't ask you. Did he cable about the axe to England or the States?"

He looked at me and hesitated, considering; then he said: "The rule is very strict, Mr. Featherstonehaugh. But I don't mind telling you that no Chinaman has telegraphed to the States this voyage."

I thanked him warmly and came away, thinking briskly. The Chinaman had probably cabled to London for reinforcements. I went back and cabled to Bill Throgmorton to meet the *Carmania* at Southampton with his Austro-Daimler. I didn't want any frisking on the way to London Town.

At Southampton comrade Kwei's Chinaman and three more left the *Carmania* just in front of us, and they were not far from us in the Custom House, though none of them seemed to see us, and they went out of it just in front of us, and there three Chinese friends met them. The seven of them looked as ugly a gang of thugs as you could wish to see. But there also was Bill Throgmorton and the Austro-Daimler, and in about half a minute I had introduced Sarah, and we were moving off. Then the Chinamen did see us, quite distinctly. They stood still and glared, jabbering furiously. I thought it quite likely that they wouldn't see us again for quite a while.

I explained the business to Bill, as much of it as I wanted, and he drove us to Grantham. My hat! It was ripping to be in the English country again, and it was a ripping drive. We stayed the night at Grantham, and next morning took the train to York. From York I took a taxi to the Hall, and we reached it in plenty of time for lurch.

Strensall opened the door and jumped at the sight of me. Then he grinned and said: "Good morning, Mr. Jocelyn. I knew you'd be coming home one day this week. His lordship *will* be pleased to see you."

Strensall always knows everything; but we humour him, for he is the best butler in Yorkshire and about a hundred years old.

"How are you, Strensall? I knew I should find you not looking a day older," said I. "This is Miss Burton, my secretary, and this is a young Chinese friend I'm taking care of. What they will want will be the sunniest bedroom and sitting-room in the West wing, and they will want them now, for comrade Kwei wants to sleep."

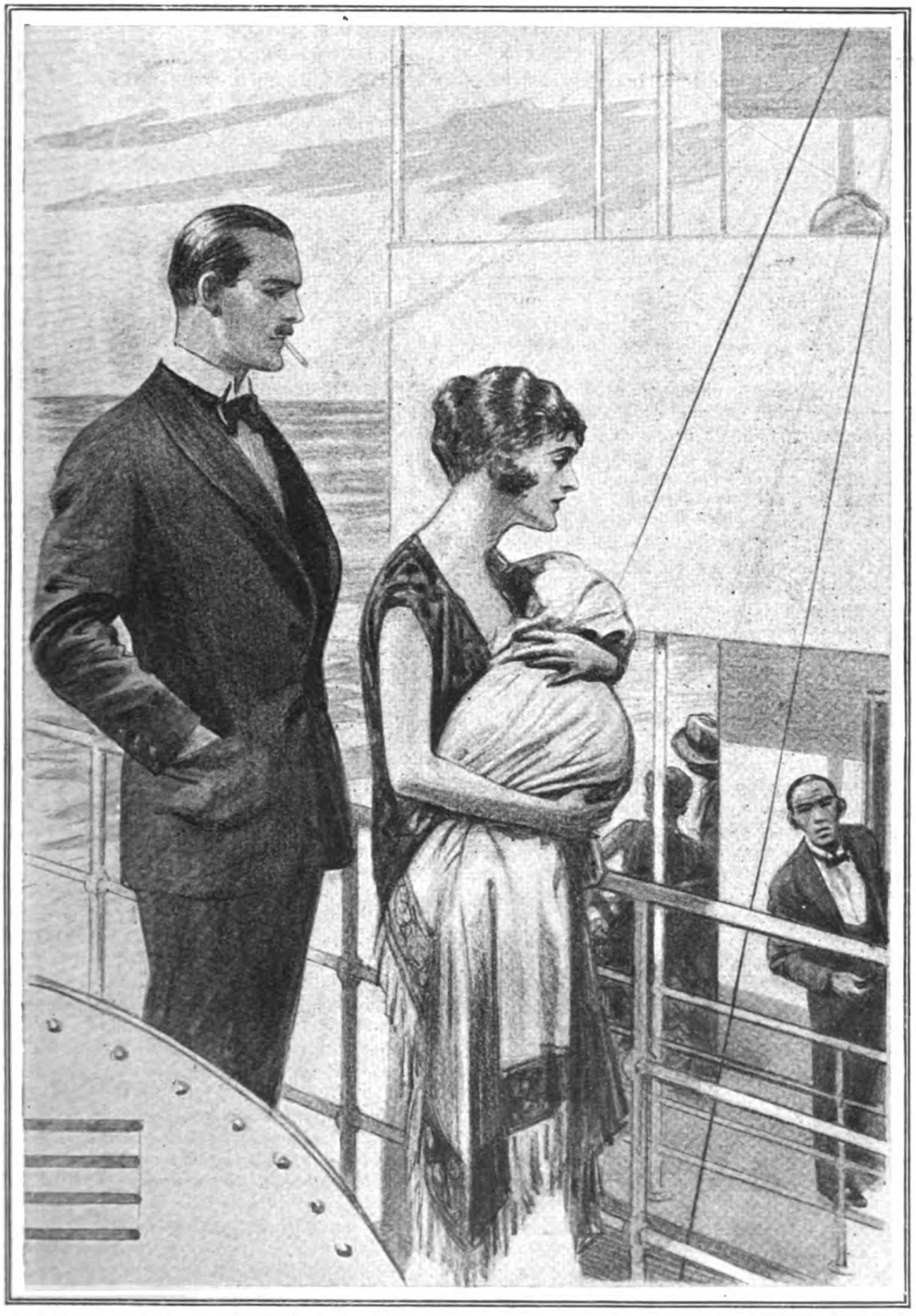
"They shall be ready in ten minutes, sir," said Strensall, and we went into the hall.

MY young sister Alicia was coming down the stairs, and she came down them quicker at the sight of us and sprang upon me and kissed me. I introduced her to Sarah. But a minute later she went up the stairs, yelling: "Joss has come home, Aunt Caroline! And he isn't destitute at all, but he's brought such a pretty secretary and the loveliest Chinese baby you ever saw with him!"

I put Sarah into an easy-chair and went into the library, which the governor has turned into a museum, and there I found him wallowing in arrow-heads. He woke up at the sight of me; and we were pleased to see one another. He told me that they had missed me a lot, that the place did not run as smoothly when I wasn't about, looking after things, and it was selfish, but he was glad that I hadn't made a success of it in New York.

"But I haven't done so badly," I said. "I've brought back a secretary and a Chinese baby and a couple of thousand dollars."

That brought him into the hall quite quickly, and I introduced him to Sarah, and I saw at once that he liked her, and, of course, she liked him. Then Aunt Caroline came downstairs with Alicia. What we do with Aunt Caroline is bear. We wish she would live somewhere else, but she won't. She is enormously rich and enormously



A steward came out of the companion-way and glanced up at us and stopped short and stared. It was the Chinaman who had tossed comrade Kwei up to me.

stingy, and the worst grumbler in Yorkshire, and in her usual cross-grained way she was up-stage with Sarah and sniffed at comrade Kwei.

Then Tollerton sauntered in on his crutches. I never came across anyone else who could get the effect of sauntering on crutches; but Tollerton is always tremendously IT, and I'm not sure that, though he was so dreadfully smashed up in the war, he is not even more IT than ever. But I'm afraid he won't live to be Earl of Easingwold, poor chap, which is what keeps me tied to the place, except for a few months at a time, like that shot at getting rich quickly in New York. He was as pleased as the governor to see me back, and took to Sarah and comrade Kwei at once.

Then Strensall came to say that Miss Burton's rooms were ready, and Alicia insisted on carrying Kwei up to them.

I stayed and told the others about New York and how I hadn't found a job to get rich in.

Then I handed the jolt I'd been carrying about with me to Aunt Caroline; I said: "So I've come back to buy the bee farm I've always wanted, with the money Aunt Caroline promised me."

"What money?" snapped Aunt Caroline.

"Well, when I was starting you were so certain that I was going to return destitute and in rags that you said you would cheerfully give me three times whatever I brought back above sixpence. Here's the sixpence, and here's a fiver and four Bradburys and two thousand-dollar notes. So you owe me twenty-seven pounds and six thousand dollars, which is twelve hundred guineas. And I'll put up a bee farm under the edge of the wold and sell the best honey in England by the ton."

IT was a jolt all right; Aunt Caroline gasped. But when she had got breath enough to say that she'd been joking, the governor and Tollerton were down on her like a cart-load of bricks, and in the end she gave in. It has done her a world of good parting with that twelve hundred, made her more civil.

Then Sarah and Alicia came down, and we went in to lunch, and there was no butcher's meat.

After lunch I showed the governor the emerald celt, and it fairly startled him. He said that it might be a symbol or it might be a talisman, or it might be connected with one of the obscure cults which have lived on under the official religions of China, but, anyhow, it was worth a good many thousand pounds, and the best place for it was the vaults of Coutts's till the baby grew up. He would make inquiries about it cautiously, next time he went to London. I handed it over to him. It would be best that it should be in Coutts's when the Chinamen came to Easingwold. I saw no chance of their not coming.

WHEN I woke up next morning and heard only the sounds of the country, cattle lowing and sheep bleating away in the fields, and the doves cooing in the cedars in the gardens and the peacocks screaming, my expedition to New York seemed no more than a dream—all except the end of it with Sarah and comrade Kwei in it. I settled down to the old life without an effort.

But about five days later Sarah said to me, one evening when we were walking in the garden after dinner: "Now that I've got Kwei comfortably settled at Easingwold, I suppose I can be getting home."

"You want a holiday already?" I said, pretty severely.

"A holiday?" she said.

"Well, the agreement was that you should be my secretary for a year if I paid your passage to England. Agreements have to be kept, and now that I'm a capitalist it's my job to exact my pound of flesh and grind the faces of the poor."

"I can see you doing it," she said, grinning at me.

"You will see me grinding this one," said I.

"But you don't want a secretary," she said.

"I do want a secretary. Did you ever hear of anyone running a bee farm without a secretary? And, anyhow, I've got a secretary, and I'm going to keep it. I've got into the way of having one, and I can't do without it. You know perfectly well I can't."

"I don't," she said.

"Well, it's early yet, but you'll learn that it is so," said I, being diplomatic, for I didn't want to rush things.

She said nothing for about half a minute; she seemed to be thinking; then she said: "Oh, well, it's a good thing I didn't take any autumn and winter frocks with me to New York; but by next spring I shall be going about in rags."

"A salary will be arranged," said I, in a lofty way.

"It won't! It wasn't in the bargain! And if you think I'm going to take a salary for doing nothing at all, you're wrong!" she said, flaring up rather.

"There will be plenty to do," I said. "I shall be handling most of the governor's correspondence, and there'll be letters and letters about all kinds of things connected

with the bee farm. You'll have heaps to do."

That seemed to satisfy her, for she calmed down and said no more about going.

She was uncommonly useful, for so many more letters got written, letters about the estate; and she fitted into our life at the Hall perfectly. Also she kept possession of comrade Kwei, though I wanted to get him a nurse, and looked after him. He saw a lot of country life and got plenty of fresh air, because when I drove about the estate, keeping tenants up to the mark or looking into their complaints, or went fishing or shooting, I took him with me—at least, she brought him. It was surprising the amount of ground she could cover with comrade Kwei on her hip and how quickly she learnt to throw a fly. Alicia, who is nearly as good a fisherman and shot as I am, often came with us, but I thought myself that we got on better alone.

Of course, Aunt Caroline did not make herself pleasant to Sarah, but then she did not know how, and one day she descended on me in the gun-room and said: "I want to speak to you seriously, Jocelyn. You've got to bear in mind that you'll be Earl of Easingwold one of these days."

"Not for at least seven thousand of them. So we won't start worrying about that," said I.

"But you must remember your responsibilities, and I feel it my duty to warn you. That girl, Miss Burton, is setting her cap at you," she went on, with a sour face and a voice like vinegar.

"It's very good of you, Aunt Caroline. But you're wrong," I said. "I'm setting my cap at her; and we'll let it go at that."

There was rather a fuss; but we let it go at that.

THEN the governor went up to London and took the emerald celt with him. He left it at Coutts's and came back rather uneasy about it. He had shown it to an expert in Chinese things who had only been able to tell him that, from the style of the carving, he believed it to be Middle Ming, about the end of the fifteenth century. Without telling them that it was in England, that expert had made inquiries about it of two of the leading London Chinese, and they had seemed immensely astonished that a European should ever have heard of it. In fact, they gave him the impression that it was something very important indeed, and that they were very much annoyed that he should have heard about it. So it seemed more unlikely than ever that I should be allowed to keep it till comrade Kwei's twenty-first birthday without a struggle, or perhaps two. I might have to deal with the London Chinamen first and the comrade's step-brothers afterwards, or with both combined. But it would be some time before the New York Chinamen could take a hand in the game.

The weeks ran on, but nothing happened till the last Thursday in September, and then things began to move rather suddenly. On Thursday, from eleven till six, the historic parts of the Hall are open to visitors, and a confounded nuisance they are. But we have to let people see it, and we stick them; and, of course, three or four thousand shillings a year come in useful for repairs. After lunch on that Thursday I was up in the nursery in the West wing helping Sarah amuse the comrade, when I saw one of the large cars from the Royal Station Hotel at York coming up the drive full of visitors. Then I saw, sitting beside the driver, a large, fat, yellow Chinaman. The trouble was going to begin.

I said nothing to Sarah. Why worry her? I went down to the hall and told Strensall to keep an eye on the Chinaman and see that he did not stray from the party. Then I went back to Sarah and suggested that we should try to catch a dish of trout for dinner, and we went.

The stream comes down from the wold, and the green pool, which we fished, is halfway up the slope at the north-western corner of the home wood, and there is a clear view down into the gardens from it. I kept an eye on them, and in about three-quarters of an hour I saw a figure come out of the door at the end of the east wing. It was the big Chinaman. He moved about uncommonly quickly, taking cover wherever there was any, and I tumbled to it that he was making a careful reconnaissance of the house and gardens.

I stood watching him, not thinking of Sarah, when she suddenly said from behind me: "What's that fat man doing in the gardens?"

"I was just wondering," I said, quietly.

"Why, it's a Chinaman!" she said.

I tried to persuade her that it wasn't, but she wouldn't have it, and she was a good deal upset about it, more upset than I had expected; but she certainly had grown tremendously fond of comrade Kwei. I told her that it was the celt they were after, not the comrade, but she said that their only way of getting the celt was to get the comrade, and then I should have no right to it, and they could make me hand it over. There was a lot in that.

We did not go back to the Hall till we saw the car full of visitors leave, the big Chinaman again sitting beside the driver. Strensall was uncommonly peeved about the Chinaman's slipping away, but for the first half-

hour the beggar had been the life of the party, in the forefront and asking all the questions, and then he wasn't there. When the others came out of the Hall they found him sitting in the car, talking to the driver. A cool beggar.

We held a council of war that evening and decided that the Chinaman's examining the house and gardens meant that they were going to break in one night and try to get away with Kwei, and probably the celt as well. It did not look an easy job. So we transferred Sarah and the comrade to Henry VIII.'s bedroom above the great hall, because we all slept in bedrooms round it. Also I told the keepers and the gardeners and the shepherds on the wold to keep their eyes open for Chinamen, especially at night, so that all the countryside would be on the look-out for them. I could not see how, unless they made an attack in force, they could find out where Kwei was sleeping. Also I arranged that the York police should let me know if any Chinamen came to York.

Nothing happened; no Chinamen appeared. Then, five days later, Alicia came in to tea one afternoon, looking rather startled. Sarah saw it and asked her what had happened.

"Oh, I had rather a jar. Hawkins told me that there were a couple of coveys of partridges in the long meadow, and I went down to try to get a brace. I couldn't get near them and gave it up, and on my way back, in the middle of the home wood, I heard something move on my right, and looked round and saw a yellow face staring at me round the trunk of a large elm about thirty yards in, and when it saw I saw it, it vanished. I was glad I had my gun with me, I can tell you."

"All imagination. Your head's full of Chinamen, and you'll be seeing them everywhere," said Aunt Caroline, instantly.

But I did not agree with her: Alicia is only fourteen, but she is level-headed enough and has no nerves. But how had a Chinaman got into the home wood? Where had he come from, and how? Not from York and not by train, or I should have heard about it. But nowadays it is so much easier to get about unobserved: a motor-car might have brought him from Leeds and dropped him, and be coming back for him.

I told Hawkins that there was a Chinaman in the home wood, but he would not believe it. But the home wood is a couple of miles long, running up to the edge of the wold, and a mile across, and here and there an acre or so is pathless. After dinner that night I went down to it myself and slipped quietly into it, and moved quietly along the edge of it nearest the Hall.

The light of the harvest moon was almost as bright as day. I saw nothing and heard nothing till I had turned and was coming back. I came to one of the broad drives that run right through the wood and stopped and looked down it. About a hundred yards down I saw two rabbits bolt across it, as if they were scared badly. It might have been a stoat, but I waited. Then two men ran quickly across it. They were short, slim men, much too small to be any of the keepers. There was more than one Chinaman in the home wood.

But even then I did not tumble to what they were really up to, and I slept that night with my bedroom door open and my automatic under my pillow. Nothing happened.

I SPENT most of the next morning and afternoon arranging a grand search of the home wood. I got together nearly a hundred men, chiefly tenants and farm labourers, to meet on the wold at the top of the wood at seven in the morning to sweep down the length of the wold and drive the Chinamen down to the road that runs to Easingwold along the bottom of it. There a dozen men would be posted to catch them. It would be worth ten pounds' worth of beer.

After tea Sarah and I went up to the stream for trout; Alicia came with us as far as the stream and went on to shoot rabbits. We fished the green pool, Sarah carrying comrade Kwei comfortably on her left hip as she threw the fly. Like a fool, without thinking, I moved on up the stream, leaving her at the green pool. I had gone about seventy yards up it, when there came a scream from Sarah.

Then a loud cry: "Joss! The Chinamen!"

I started; but it was no ground to sprint on—very rough.

I heard her cry out and say: "You brute!" And then I came a cropper.

By the time I had picked myself up and reached her twenty seconds must have elapsed. She was picking herself up and holding her left wrist.

"The brute twisted it and snatched Kwei from me!" she said. "Come on!" and she started to run, sobbing.

I ran with her, getting back my breath from the cropper. The path ran twisting between tall bushes; the Chinamen were out of sight. They would get into the wood well ahead of us, and there'd be no finding them. Their car might be on any of three roads, waiting for them. It looked pretty hopeless.

Then Alicia's gun banged twice, about two hundred yards ahead, and a curious squealing broke out.

I saw a yellow face staring at me round the trunk of a large elm.

"What the devil?" I said, and sprinted ahead.

I bucketed round a corner and nearly ran into Alicia and knocked her down. She had the comrade on her right hip, and her gun in her left hand, and she was smiling. I pulled up, and she stopped smiling.

"I gave them fifty yards before I peppered them. I did really, Joss—quite fifty yards," she said, quickly and very earnestly; and I knew quite well that she hadn't given anyone forty yards before she peppered them—thirty at the outside.

"Peppered who?" I said.

"The two Chinamen. I heard Sarah scream, and then I saw them coming before they saw me, and I stepped into the bushes and let them run past me, and stepped out and gave them a good fifty yards before I peppered them. Then, while they were busy squealing, I ran and picked up the comrade and came away with him."

"Splendid!" I said, and I examined the comrade carefully.

He certainly wasn't hurt, and he seemed more thoughtful than startled, and tried to get my finger into his mouth.

Sarah came up, panting and very white.

and gave a little cry at the sight of the comrade, and almost snatched him from Alicia, and fairly nuzzled him and cried with relief. I told her and Alicia to get back to the Hall and send the gardeners and some bandages, and took Alicia's gun and went on to take a look at the Chinamen. They were about a hundred yards down the path and had stopped squealing, but when I came up to them they were looking uncommonly sick and sorry for themselves, much too sorry to put up any fight when I took their automatics from them. One of them was one of comrade Kwei's step-brothers. Then I had a look at their calves. As I thought, Alicia had given them no forty yards before she peppered them.

I talked to them about the seriousness of kidnapping a child in a civilized country, and said I hoped that seven years' penal servitude would teach them not to twist English girls' wrists. Then Alicia and the gardeners came, and we bandaged their calves and carried them back to the Hall and put them to bed. I went up to the nursery and found Sarah recovered and the comrade making a hearty meal. Her wrist was hurting her a good deal, and when Dr. Horton came I made him examine it before he went to the Chinamen. He found that the brute had broken one of the metacarpal bones, and bound it up. He was over an hour picking the pellets from the Chinamen's calves, for both of them were carrying about the best part of a charge of shot. He said that they'd walk stiffly for many a long day.

FIVE days went by, and I began to wonder what Kwei's other stepbrothers were doing. Then on the afternoon of the sixth day Strensall came up to the nursery to tell me that a Chinaman had called to see me. I went down to the blue drawing-room, and there was our fat friend who had come with the visitors.

He was soapy enough when he did get started, and he spoke English very well. It seemed that there had been what he called an unfortunate misapprehension. Comrade Kwei's stepbrothers were noble fellows, and they had wanted very badly to have their little brother back at home, and they still wanted him. I told him that they didn't live in a healthy house, and they could go on wanting him till the cows came home. Then he said that it was not really their little brother that they wanted, but his little jade axe, and he had come to make an agreement about it and his two wounded countrymen. I told him that, as soon as they were well enough to travel, his two wounded countrymen were going to take a short journey to York Jail, and he could make an agreement with the police.

He got flustered and argued and begged. But I stuck to it. The brutes had twisted Sarah's wrist, and to jail they should go. Then he talked about compensating her. I had plenty of time to consider things while he talked away, and I saw pretty clearly that life would be more than a bit tiresome with a gang of greedy and revengeful Chinamen always on the track of comrade Kwei, and nearly sure to get him in the end, and that money in the hand is better than an emerald celt in the bank, especially when there are doubts about the ownership of the emerald celt. So I grew a bit less peeved and asked what they wanted to pay for the emerald, and he said, "Three thousand pounds."

I laughed a good loud scornful laugh. What is three thousand to Chinamen in Wetzler suitings? And we argued it out till he agreed to pay seven thousand for the emerald and two thousand compensation to Sarah. He went away very respectful indeed.

I told the governor and Tollington, and they both agreed that I had done the best thing for the comrade, since the beggars knew that he had the emerald.

I caught the next London express at York and got the emerald celt from the bank first thing next morning, and was back at the Hall at half-past two. At three o'clock my stout friend—I never asked his name—arrived in a large car with the nine thousand pounds in notes, and I handed over the emerald celt and the peppered Chinamen to him, and was jolly glad to see the last of them.

I locked the comrade's seven thousand in the governor's safe and went up to the nursery with the two thousand for Sarah, and told her what I had done. She was immensely surprised and pleased.

Then, when she had counted the notes and stroked them and made them crinkle, she said: "But you're the only one who doesn't get anything out of it."

"Oh, yes, I do," I said. "I get you. I'm going to marry you for your money."

She blushed and laughed and said: "But I've always wanted to be married for myself!"

"And there'll be something doing in that way, too, if you notice very carefully," I said, and grabbed her and tried to show her.

Part of the posting room at the G.P.O. The moving band in the foreground conveys letters straight from the posting box to the sorting office.

IN THE POST

A Peep Behind the Scenes at the Wonders of the G.P.O.

By

FENN SHERIE

"TO begin with," said the official who had undertaken to show me some of the wonders of the Post Office, "you may care to see exactly what happens when London posts its evening mail."

So he took me into the "E.C." office at St. Martin's-le-Grand and led the way to the basement, which is situated immediately below the public posting boxes.

It was shortly after five o'clock, and the evening rush had just commenced. Shoals of letters were slithering and sliding down polished wooden chutes, some of them falling straight into mail-bags suspended in readiness to catch them, and others—for London

delivery—tumbling on to a moving band which carried them away in a swirling stream to the sorting office on the floor above.

"The average posting in this district is three million letters daily," said the official, "and most of them come in between five and seven in the evening. They all have to be stamped, sorted, and made up ready for dispatch in the space of a few hours. In fact, many of those for the London area are delivered the same evening."

"What happens to letters posted in the wrong boxes?" I asked.

He smiled the smile of a martyr.

"They go to the wrong sorting office and have to be sent all the way back again. In this district alone we get nearly a hundred thousand wrong postings a day! And when you realize that the other chief sorting office is at Mount Pleasant, over a mile away, you will understand what a waste of time, trouble, and transport these errors involve."

We remained for a while to watch some of the bulging bags tied, sealed, labelled, and dumped on to automatic conveyers which carried them off on the first stage of their travels—some direct to the Foreign Section on the second floor, others to the mail vans which were waiting to transport them to distant sorting offices.

Upstairs, in the "E.C." sorting office, the letters for London and its suburbs were arriving in shoals. As they were tipped out on to great trough-like tables they piled up in heaps until they almost threatened to overflow to the floor. Quick-fingered sorters, standing almost shoulder to shoulder, were working feverishly to reduce these heaps to some sort of order. "Halfpenny matter" was directed into one channel; large letters were sent off in another direction. The remainder were "faced"—*i.e.*, arranged with all the addresses and stamps facing in the same direction—and sent careering along a moving band to the electric post-marking machines.

Through the whirring machines they went in a continuous stream, shooting out from the other side at the rate of six hundred a minute, all neatly post-marked and stacked ready for handling. Postmen picked them up, dexterously spreading two or three hundred at a time along their arms, and carried them off to the sorting tables.

"You will notice that from now onwards the letters are kept facing in the same direction," said the official, "so that sorters and delivery postmen are able to read the addresses at a glance."

We watched one of the sorters at work.

He sat on a wooden seat, which was

One of the "facing" tables where letters are prepared for post-marking.

adjustable according to the height of the occupant, and swivelled so as to allow him freedom of movement. Before him was a series of shelves, fitted with a series of wooden slats bearing the names of the various districts—"E.C.," "S.W.," "N.," and so forth—into which the letters were being sorted.

"This is called 'primary sorting,'" explained the official. "We still describe the various district areas as 'roads,' as our forefathers did in the coaching days."

I noticed that at each sorter's desk there was a separate selection marked "Comps."

"That is for competition entries," explained the official. "During the winter months we receive over three million a week. At one time we used to handle them as ordinary letters, but owing to the enormous popularity of football and crossword contests we now have to deal with them separately. During one period of the day we transform the greater part of the office into one huge competition department and clear the whole lot at a single sitting. You see these slats on the sorting tables? By turning them over we get a fresh set of selections—instead of the names of districts we have the names of the various newspapers and journals running competitions.

"On a Thursday—which is usually the closing day for the principal competitions—we have been known to receive as many as a million and a half 'Comps' in one mail! You can imagine the difficulty of sorting them without interfering with the normal services. I remember when the competition boom first started we used to send the entries straight to the newspaper offices in van-loads, until the organizers found their premises stacked from floor to ceiling with mail-bags and begged us to stem the flood until they could find a means of coping with it."

An electric cancelling machine which post-marks and counts six hundred letters a minute.

After "primary sorting" the letters are taken to the "road" tables and further divided up into suburban districts. Then they are tied up in bundles, tossed into mail-bags, and wheeled out on to the platforms where the red motor vans are waiting to take them away.

In the "E.C." dispatching department they make up between three and four thousand bags, or over a hundred and fifty van-loads, for the suburbs every day.

Add to these the bags which are made up in outlying post-offices and have to pass through the "E.C." dispatch department, and the total number handled amounts to about thirty-eight thousand a week!

"Now come along and see something of the collecting arrangements."

ENTERING a sort of cage I was introduced to the head postman on duty.

He was surrounded on the one hand by scores of bunches of keys, and on the other by hundreds of white enamel tablets of the kind that are slotted into letter-boxes to indicate the time of the next collection.

"Every bunch of keys is checked in and out," he explained. "A postman is not, as

a rule, allowed to go off duty until he has brought back his keys and the correct number of enamel tablets. He can't get the discs out of the letter-boxes without opening the doors, so by checking those he brings back we are able to make sure that no collection has been overlooked.

"We deliver about ten million letters a week in this district," said the official. "The first morning delivery alone averages over a million. Of course, delivering letters is only one part of a postman's job. He has to sort them into 'walks' before he takes them out. He has to remember which people have moved, or gone away for holidays and want their letters forwarded; and he has to know which firms want their letters set aside for 'callers' or 'express delivery.'"

"Exactly what are 'callers'?" I asked.

"Why, many of the big banks and other firms whose correspondence is of a very private nature arrange with us to have their mail put in special bags and kept under lock and key until called for. Other firms have a standing arrangement that all packages containing samples of goods from abroad shall be promptly forwarded by special messenger as soon as received at the G.P.O. The sorters and postmen are expected to keep a special look-out for these packages.

"When samples of, say, currants arrive from abroad, there is very keen competition between the merchants here to get them quickly, so that they can be the first to cable their orders and buy up large stocks before their rivals are able to move.

"We sometimes receive strongly-worded complaints that Messrs. X. have received their sample before Messrs. Y., in spite of the fact that they reached London by the same mail. These firms do not realize that the mail often consists of some hundreds of sacks, and that it is utterly impossible to open, sort, clear, and deliver all of the letters at exactly the same instant."

In the Foreign Section, on the floor above, I was introduced to another official who had a similar puzzle to solve—though, it should be added, he seemed very optimistic about it.

"See that mass of sacks there? Those are for the Indian mail, which leaves to-night. If they had come into the office gradually we could have handled them with the utmost ease. But that mountain of mail-bags—over two thousand of them—represents to-day's posting alone. It will involve a tremendous pressure of work to get it all cleared by to-night.

"Here are twenty bags of circulars from one individual firm. They must have kept their staff busy for several days, addressing them and putting them in envelopes. Why didn't they post them as soon as they were ready, instead of holding them all up until this late hour?"

"Do they run the risk of missing the mail?" I asked.

"Oh, no! We guarantee that every item posted in time shall catch the mail for which

Postmen preparing letters for delivery.

A corner of the Foreign Section, showing part of the United States mail being prepared for dispatch. The moving band on the right carries the bags to the mail vans outside.

it is intended. These will be sorted in time, even if we have to increase our staff to cope with them."

"I suppose you find it very difficult to estimate the number of sorters required for duty on a particular evening?" I suggested.

"Well, of course, the size of the mail does vary considerably. It is, however, a comparatively simple matter to draft a number of sorters from one section to another when work presses. What is more difficult, though, is to estimate a week in advance the size of a particular mail. Yet we have to do this with a fair degree of accuracy so that the railway companies shall know how many vans will be required on the train. Let me show you last week's figures just as an example."

The official took some papers from a buff-coloured folder and ran his finger down several columns of typewritten statistics.

"Here we are. Last week our transport experts estimated that the mail for India would comprise seven thousand seven hundred and fifty bags. The actual number sent off was seven thousand eight hundred. Not bad, considering that there is no means of telling how many letters people are likely to post."

"YOU spoke of 'sorting' the Indian mail," I said, presently. "Does that involve anything more than separating all the letters for India?"

"Oh, yes," was the reply. "We divide the Indian mail into forty-three different selections.

"The same method is applied to letters for other countries. I know that many people believe that letters for New Zealand, to take a comparatively small country as an example, are simply bundled together in one batch and sent to Auckland or Wellington for further attention. As a matter of fact, we have twelve separate selections for New Zealand.

"The sorting of letters in the country of origin is, of course, a matter of international arrangement, and it saves a great deal of unnecessary work. Imagine how much simpler it is for us, say, when the bags of mail arriving from France are separately labelled 'Birmingham,' 'Glasgow,' and so forth. They can be transported straight from one railway terminus to another without any delay in a sorting office."

I commented upon the varying hues of the labels in the Foreign Section.

"The labels are coloured," explained my guide, "in order to facilitate sorting abroad. Grey for Egypt, Pink for East Africa, Yellow for China, and so forth. The coolie who handles the bags for transhipment, say at Aden or Port Said, cannot read the labels—but if he knows that all the bags bearing buff labels have to be separated from those with red ones, he can do his work without much supervision."

Later I watched the opening of a batch of mail that had just arrived from Germany. Whilst the sacks were being emptied on to the table an official was hovering round, pouncing upon an occasional package here and there, feeling it between his fingers, shaking it against his ear, and sniffing at it.

"Who is that inquisitive gentleman?" I asked.

"He is an officer on 'stop' duty," said my guide. "One of the sleuths of the Post Office, who search for dutiable or prohibited articles."

When the sleuth had collected a good basketful of packages we followed him to his lair and watched him gloating over his "catch."

"How do you detect contraband goods?" I asked him.

"Instinct," he replied, mysteriously, picking up one of the smaller packages and squeezing it between his fingers. "I fancy this one contains silk," he added, snipping the strings and commencing to unwrap it.

Silk it was!

"That will have to go up to the Excise Department to be charged for duty. Now let us have a look at another. This one has been posted at a special low rate as 'Sample—of no commercial value.' It contains, as you see, a single shoe."

He plunged his hand into the basket of packages and extracted another of similar shape. Opening this, he discovered a second shoe of similar size and design.

"There you are," he said, with a twinkle in his eye. "The left shoe in one package and the right shoe in the other. Separately they are 'Samples—of no commercial value,' but together they form a good pair of saleable shoes. That is one of the many artful dodges we have to guard against."

"Mind your backs, please!"

We stepped aside to make way for a man who was wheeling a truck-load of empty mail-bags. He went to the end of the room and tipped the whole lot down a chute.

"They are going down to the bag department in the basement," said the official, answering my unspoken question. "Come with me and I will show you."

We went into the basement and watched the empty bags coming helter-skelter down the chute and falling with a heavy thud on to a large platform. Every thud sent up a cloud of dust, but a huge metal funnel suspended over the platform promptly sucked every speck of it away. The bags were sorted and folded. Any found to be dirty were placed twenty or thirty at a time into dry-cleaning machines, which pummelled and shook them until they were speckless.

Whilst we were in the basement I noticed an enormous shaft sunk deep into the earth.

"That's the entrance to the new Post Office Tube," explained my escort. "There is a railway station down there as big as the Underground

Postal officers on "stop" duty examining foreign "Samples" in search of dutiable or prohibited articles.

junction at Piccadilly Circus. It will not be many months before we have a complete system of underground trains running between all the principal sorting offices in London."

"That reminds me," I said. "I should like to take a look at the Inland Sorting Office at Mount Pleasant."

"But you haven't seen half this place yet," protested the official, proudly. "There's the registered letter office, the staff canteens, the restaurants, the first-aid department, the . . . "

But my head was already buzzing with facts and figures, so I promised to call again some other day. Then, after a brief respite, I made my way to Mount Pleasant.

The site of this vast building—the largest of its kind in the world—is not quite so picturesque as its name suggests. From an old print which I saw in one of the offices, depicting the same spot just over a hundred years ago, however, I was able to understand how the name originated.

In a brand-new wing of the building is the Inland Sorting Office, where the "Country" mails are handled. It is estimated that they sort three million items a day and dispatch forty thousand bags every week.

"What is your principal difficulty in this office?" I asked, having discovered that postal officials like to tell their troubles to journalists in the hope of enlisting public sympathy and assistance.

"Same as in most others," replied the superintendent with a smile. "Coping with sudden rushes of work which we are not able to anticipate. For instance, we had an exceptionally busy time last Sunday evening. Do you know why? Simply because it was a wet day, and many people, being forced to remain indoors, promptly remembered the letters which they had neglected to write on finer days. We never know when an extra large mail is coming. When the last Loan Conversion took place we were nearly overwhelmed with "Official" letters, and the Bank paid us over eleven thousand pounds for postage!

"The sorting of bulky packages, such as rolled-up newspapers, is another difficult problem we have to tackle. We have overcome this in many cases by arranging with the circulation departments of the leading journals which have exceptionally large mails to send us their wrappers already stamped and addressed. We simply sort and post-mark the wrappers; then they take them back, put them round their packages, and return them to us partly prepared for dispatch."

A corner of the Returned Letter Office, showing the contents of parcels that have come to grief through inadequate packing.

WHILST he was talking I noticed three coloured electric light bulbs on the wall.

"What are these for?" I asked.

"They are used as signals to indicate to the supervisors how the mail is progressing," he explained. "The green light means that the primary sorting is finished. Red indicates that all the 'short' letters have been cleared. Yellow signifies that the last of the larger packets and newspapers has gone. That is the "All clear" signal, and as soon as it goes up the sorters heave a sigh of relief."

Perhaps the most interesting section at Mount Pleasant is the Returned Letter Office, to which about twelve thousand undelivered letters and postal packages find their way every day.

There are departments—or "duties," they call them—for dealing with parcels broken in transit, with packages that have been refused admittance by foreign customs officials, with letters that have been rejected by sorters on account of the addresses being almost illegible—in fact, with all the flotsam and jetsam of the postal streams, even to umbrellas and bicycles left behind in post-offices.

The deciphering of cryptic addresses is only undertaken in cases where members of the public have made innocent lapses. People who invent puzzle addresses to test the ingenuity of the sorters are no longer encouraged. Their efforts are promptly returned with the endorsement "Insufficient address." Here are some typical specimens of addresses which have puzzled the experts in the "Blind Division." Not long ago they handled a letter addressed :—

Michael Kelly,
Little Elfet,
Sir Nicolas Dusty
School,

whilst another bore simply the words "Ferarandson Obanvidok."

Who but a genius would have divined that the first address was "St. Nicholas Industrial School, Little Ilford,' and that the other letter was intended not for an address in Russia, but for a firm named Fearon and Son, of Holborn Viaduct?

Other quaintly-addressed letters have included the words "In no Jamtshere" for Northamptonshire, "Komerseldok" for Commercial Dock, and "Cocks and Hens" for Poultry, E.C.

I asked for a rough estimate of the number of packages and letters lying in the R.L.O. awaiting claim.

"That is a difficult question to answer," the overseer replied. "But our books show that we docket and sort away something like a hundred and twenty thousand in the course of a year!"

Registered packages are retained for one year, and unregistered packages containing articles of value are kept for four months, except when the contents include perishable goods, which may be disposed of at the discretion of the Assistant Controller.

We passed into the parcel section of the R.L.O., where the first thing that impressed me was the powerful odour of disinfectant that permeated the room.

It was not long before I realized the necessity for it. At the first table I approached was a damaged parcel containing fish which had grown old in the course of its travels. Beside it was a broken bottle of perfume, a tin of preserved eggs, and a pheasant that had seen better days. In every case the scent was far stronger than the packing.

High above the room was a large gallery leading to a series of cubicles that reminded one of prison cells. In these the unclaimed parcels—unless they were too offensive to be retained—were stored pending application from their owners.

"If they are not claimed within four months," said my guide, "they will be sold by public auction.

"By the way," he added, "we find some queer things inside parcels occasionally. I remember when I was a sorter many years ago an ordinary unregistered package burst open on my desk and a shower of golden sovereigns fell out. They rolled about all over the floor, but we gathered up as many as we could find. There were exactly ninety-nine of them. Inquiries were instituted and it was discovered that there should have been a hundred. You have no idea of the amount of correspondence and the number of official inquiries that resulted. However, we never found the missing coin."

WHILST it may be true that red tape and stodgy officialdom may be found in the Post Office, as in most other Government Departments, a tour of inspection brings one to regard matters in a different light. To see the care and trouble that are taken to ensure that all packages—even though they may sometimes be insufficiently addressed, incorrectly posted, or insecurely packed—shall, if possible, reach their destinations with the minimum of delay is to realize that the Post Office is probably the most efficient and the most human of all the public services.

PERPLEXITIES.

— By —
HENRY E. DUDENEY.

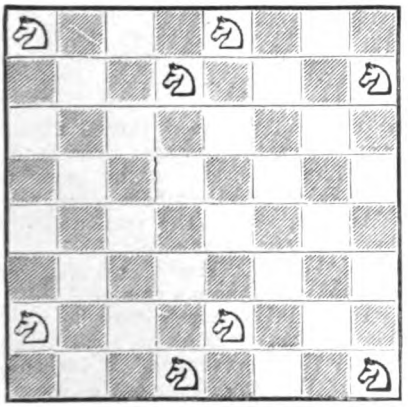
842.—THE SHOCK.

IT is curious how some new little puzzle or catch will occasionally interest the public mind and for a time be perpetually cropping up, in a great variety of different dresses. I have lately been bombarded with one of these little things, all containing exactly the same point, though presented in many different ways. I give an example, though, on account of space, it is cut down to the mere ending, which is all that is really essential. Doubtless many of my readers will have heard it in some form or other.

An English officer, after a gruesome experience during the Boxer Rebellion in China some years ago, fell asleep in church during the sermon. He was dreaming that the executioner was approaching him to cut off his head, and just as the sword was descending on the officer's unhappy neck his wife lightly touched her husband on the back of his neck with her fan, to awaken him. The shock was too great and the officer fell forward dead. Now, there is something wrong with this story. What is it? Told in this compressed form the reader will doubtless see the point immediately, but with a more elaborate dressing it is curious that so many people fail to see anything wrong and think it might quite well have happened.

843.—THE EIGHT KNIGHTS MAGIC.

READERS may perhaps remember that, as I have stated in the introduction to the "Canterbury Puzzles," nobody has ever succeeded in forming a magic square 8 × 8 with the successive moves by a knight.



The nearest approach to a solution is given in my "Amusements in Mathematics" (No. 412), which is correct except for the two diagonals which require merely the transfer of 4 from one diagonal to the other. Mr. Rouse Ball published a solution which was a perfect magic that consisted of two knights' paths, 32 not being a knight's move from 33.

Here is an interesting little puzzle by Mr. Cyril Pease. Each of the knights makes 7 moves, the squares they visit being numbered 1 to 8, all starting from No. 1. How are they to do this so as to form a perfect magic square? The difficulty will be to get the two long diagonals correct.

844.—TABLE-TOP AND STOOLS.

IN our issues for January-February, 1917, I gave the old puzzle of the circular table-top cut into pieces to form two oval stools each with a hand-hole. The old solution was in 8 pieces, but I gave an improved version in only 6 pieces. This is reproduced in my book, "Amusements in Mathematics," No. 157. Those who remember the puzzle will be interested in a solution in as few as 4 pieces by the late Sam Loyd. Can you cut the circle into 4 pieces that will fit together (2 and 2) and form two oval stool-tops, each with a hand-hole?

845.—FIND THE TRIANGLE.

THE sides and height of a triangle are four consecutive whole numbers. What is the area of the triangle?

846.—ELIZA'S SURNAME.

READERS will remember the old puzzle of the "Dutchmen's Wives," nearly 200 years old. We have dealt with it in these pages, and I have discussed it fully elsewhere. Here is a new extension of it sent me by a correspondent (C. C. P. S.) that I think may be found interesting.

Smith, Brown, and Robinson, having provided themselves with a penny pencil each, took their wives to a stockbroker's office to buy shares. Mary bought 50 more shares than Brown, and Robinson 120 more than Jane. Each man paid as many shillings per share as he bought shares, each wife as many pence per share as she bought shares, and every man spent one guinea more than his wife. What was Eliza's surname?

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

838.—A CURIOUS END-GAME.

WHITE should play B—B 6, when Black must capture the B. White then plays K—B 8, the P moves, and the Kt mates.

839.—WORD REVERSALS AND REFLECTIONS.

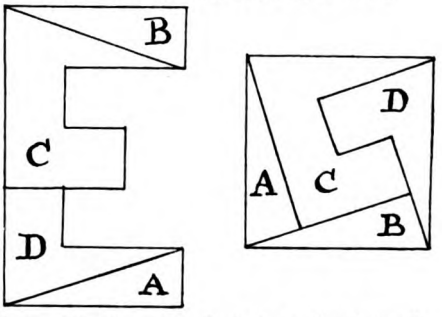
THE word is B U N G, written in small letters.

840.—BLINDNESS IN BATS.

THE fewest bats possible would be seven, and this might happen in either of three ways:—

(1) 2 with perfect sight, 1 blind only in the right eye, and 4 totally blind.
(2) 1 with perfect sight, 1 blind in the left eye only, 2 blind in the right eye only, and 3 totally blind.
(3) 2 blind in the left eye only, 3 blind in the right eye only, and 2 totally blind.

841.—DISSECTING THE LETTER E.



THE diagrams will show how the four pieces may be cut so as to form a perfect square. The pieces A and D are turned over in accordance with the conditions allowed.

A Thread of Scarlet

By

J. J. BELL

Illustrated by
E. G. OAKDALE

IN broad daylight the smoke-room of the Old Rainbow Inn, which in those days, twenty years ago, harboured an overnight guest only once in a while, looked a bare and shabby apartment; but on this black February night, when a bitter wind raged and sleet came in dense blatters against the leaded panes of the window, it offered, with its yellow lamplight and ruddy fire, a snug enough refuge.

Yet while its relative snugness might, and did, encourage customers to sit till the last lawful moment, the weather, violent since nightfall, had deterred a number of Mr. Flett's regular callers from seeking their usual refreshment within its dingy walls, and at twenty minutes before closing time there were but three persons in the room. They sat at a table between the window and the hearth, with tankards before them. The tankards were empty; had been empty for some little time, for a reason which shall shortly be made apparent.

For the moment let us make the acquaintance of the three customers, all respectable, middle-aged tradesmen from the village of Lower Ashley, well known to one another, though on the present occasion, which was certainly an abnormal one, they used the formal "Mister."

They were Migsworth, a lanky, clean-shaven man, who fancied himself a bit superior intellectually; Smith, a stumpy person, genial and indiscreet, with a heavy, drooping, ruddy moustache, which gave him a somewhat foolish look; and Butters, bulky of body and grizzly bearded, normally sociable to a moderate degree, but to-night strangely inert and self-absorbed, his occasional glances at the others being those of a half-dazed intelligence.

The door was open, and Migsworth and Smith were intent on a little scene being enacted in the passage between Mr. Flett, the landlord, and a tall, spare man of dire and sodden aspect, whose limbs yet bore him steadily enough.

"No, Mr. Breen," the landlord was saying in tones of finality, "I can't serve ye, and my advice to ye is to go home, and to your bed."

"Haven't I told ye, man, ye'll get the money in the mornin'?"

"Quite so! But that's not my point, Mr. Breen. I've got a licence to lose. In other words——"

"Come on; gimme a bottle o' whisky."

"No! Ye've had enough—more'n enough, though not in my place. Not another drop do ye get from me. Good night!"

"Damn ye!"

The man called Breen turned abruptly and went down the passage. The landlord watched him go; then, as the outer door slammed, came into the smoke-room, wiping his perspiring face. He was a stoutly-built man, not timid, as a rule.

"Quite right, Mr. Flett," said Migsworth. "He'd surely had more'n enough."

"Queer, though, how steady he walks," remarked Smith. "Don't he, Mr. Butters?"

"Who?" Butters blinked. "Oh, Breen! I'm sick o' Breen. Never out o' my shop, spyin' and pokin' around, and tryin' to get somethin' for nothin'. Was there to-night when I was closin' up. Had to turn him out." So saying, Butters relapsed into himself, huddling in his chair.

"'Tis not his head, nor yet his legs, that takes it all," the landlord said. "I never see anything like him. To tell the truth, gentlemen, I'm afeared—not of, but for him. Trade's rotten bad, the Lord knows, but I'd sooner be without Mr. Breen's custom. He's been hard at it for a solid month now, and he's gettin' worse every blessed day! Can't think when, or where, he earns the money. Never heard o' an odd-job man with so much o' the ready. Maybe he buys nothin' but whisky." The

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speaker pulled himself up. "But you was ringin', gentlemen?"

"We was, Mr. Flett." Migsworth included the three tankards in a graceful wave. "Same again, if *you* please."

As Mr. Flett proceeded to collect the tankards, Butters, as one waking up, laid a hand on his, muttering: "No more for me. Must be gettin' home."

"Tut, Mr. Butters," said Migsworth; "ye need another. We all need another, after what we've gone through this day. Take his tankard, Mr. Flett. And, mind ye, Mr. Flett, I don't wonder at Breen goin' it hard after all *he's* gone through—losin' his only friend. Both shiftless chaps; still——"

"True, true, Mr. Migsworth. Only I prefer to see a man drownin' his sorrows in moderation," said the landlord, and went out with the tankards.

MIGSWORTH laid down his pipe and gave a heavy sigh. "Ah, what a day! Longest and strangest I've ever known!"

"But not," said Smith, with a sagacious wag of the head, "not so long as last night must ha' been to Jacob Forge."

A groan came from Butters. "Last night—oh, my soul!"

The others glanced at him.

"Aye, Butters," said Smith, kindly, "it must ha' been bad for you, too, you havin' been on the jury. Always wondered why ye didn't get out o' that job. I believe ye could—but, then, maybe ye couldn't. Well, well!" With an attempt at cheerfulness: "And yet here's the three o' us, sittin' round this table for close on three hours, chattin' about 'most everything but the thing we're thinkin' on."

"Well, as two single men and a widower without offspring," observed Migsworth, "'twouldn't be natural to sit alone in our houses, dumb, and thinkin' o' Jacob Forge, our neighbour—that was. I, for one, couldn't do it."

"Oh, oh!" cried Smith, in a sudden burst of emotion, "to think that, at eight o'clock o' this blessed—I mean cursed—mornin', Jacob Forge was hanged by—by the neck until he——"

Butters made a fluttering gesture of what might have been protest, and Migsworth said:—

"Hush, Mr. Smith! No need for to go into the painful details. Forge has paid the penalty o' his crime, havin' been found guilty by a jury o' good men and true, includin' our worthy neighbour here, William Butters, who——"

Butters sat up. "I must be gettin' home. 'Tis on my mind that I left the keys o' my safe on the counter, and didn't lock up anything proper. Was too upset." He made to rise, but Migsworth interposed.

"Don't you worry, Mr. Butters. Your safe's all right. And as for Jacob Forge, his awful end was no fault o' yours. He had a fair trial and full justice. We can pity him, though none o' us ever liked him—not that I'd ever ha' dreamed o' him bein' a murd——"

Butters threw out a shaking hand. "Don't be sayin' the word! 'Tis too dreadful! Jacob was a strange man, and yet——" His hand fell. "Still—still, we've got to remember that the jury gave him guilty because o' the evidence."

"That's it!" cried Smith. "Because o' the evidence! And yet, this mornin', when I see the black flag goin' up—they did hoist it slow!—I says to myself——"

"Was *you* there?" Migsworth exclaimed.

"Aye—walked every step o' them long eight miles! I saw ye, Mr. Migsworth, all muffled up. 'Twas a bitter mornin', though. Was muffled up myself. And you, Mr. Butters—I *thought* I saw ye, too."

The shaggy head of Butters went lower. "I went to pray," he whispered, "to pray that the black flag might—not go up. Oh, my soul!"

"Now that was a strange thing to do," said Migsworth, and just then the landlord entered with the tankards. "We're talkin' o' the melancholy episode of this mornin', Mr. Flett."

"Ah, yes, yes. Very shockin', to be sure; very shockin'," Mr. Flett replied, picking up the coins put down by Migsworth. "Thank 'ee, sir. I understood from his remarks that Mr. Breen had been there, likewise."

"What? Him!" ejaculated Smith, while Migsworth said: "Oh, how could he? His only friend bein' hanged!"

"He was talkin'," the landlord proceeded, "o' puttin' a knife in the judge and poisonin' the jury."

"That's awful!" said Smith. "Breen must be goin' stark crazy."

"When a man takes to 'Scotch,'" Migsworth sagely remarked, "he's done."

"Beggin' your pardon," observed Smith, with another attempt at humour, "but judgin' from Mister Breen's case, he's never done!"

The landlord laughed, but most discreetly. "Oh, very good, Mr. Smith, very good!"

Butters lifted his head and shuddered. "What if Breen is right?"

"Right?" cried the others.

"What—what's to happen to the judge and jury, if we was all wrong?"

The landlord spoke. "What's all this, Mr. Butters?"

Butters relapsed without responding.

"Nerves, Mr. Flett," said Migsworth, confidentially, "just nerves."

"I see, I see, Mr. Migsworth, and I can well understand it. Fact is, I'm a bit that way myself at the moment."

"How so, Mr. Flett?" Smith was thirsty, and, raising his tankard, nodded to Migsworth. "Good health!"

"Cheerio!" replied Migsworth. "Sorry! I shouldn't ha' said that."

"I've got a notion," said Mr. Flett, "a preminotion, if ye understand what I mean, gentlemen, that our unfortunate friend, Mr. Breen, will come back to-night; and I don't half like it."

"You shall have our support, Mr. Flett," said Migsworth, "our moral support in refusin' him refreshment."

"Thank 'ee, sir, thank 'ee! I'm bound to refuse him. There's my conscience to be considered——"

"*And* your licence," said Smith. "Besides, he has, most likely, got no money."

"True, Mr. Smith," said the landlord, and went out.

Smith gave Butters' arm a friendly shake. "Wake up, old man! This is real good beer—comfort ye and make ye sleep sound."

Said Butters, as one suddenly awakened: "I saw Breen there this mornin'. Our mufflin's was nothin' to his. But I spied his face—oh, my God, shall I ever forget his face when the flag was goin' up?"

"What was it like?" Smith eagerly asked.

"Hush, Mr. Smith," said Migsworth, reprovingly. "It was suppused with grief, no doubt."

"It was like," faltered Butters, "a soul in torments."

"Ah, well," said Migsworth, setting down his tankard, "he seems to ha' got some decent feelin's after all—though I *have* doubted it when seein' him sittin' in yonder corner, night after night, drinkin' on his own. Shows how careful we should be in judgin' our neighbours."

"True, true," assented Smith, and took a long pull. "Maybe there was more real friendship between him and Jacob Forge than we thought. They was both such terrible unsociable chaps. Hullo! That was a horn! Sounds as if a car was goin' to stop here." He got up, went to the window, and peered into the sleety mirk. "My goodness! I don't envy any man his car on a night like this! Black as hell; sleet drivin' well-nigh level! Ugh!" He shivered. "Glad I haven't far to——" He sprang backwards.

The window flared with a throbbing flash of lightning, which was swiftly followed by a frightful thunder-crash.

With a wild cry, Butters leapt up and sank back, shaking.

"Bit unexpected at this season," Migsworth remarked, first to recover from the scare. "Why, Mr. Butters, ye're lookin' sickish! No danger, ye know."

With emotion Butters said: "Oh, there's somethin' wrong in the world this night—some awful thing is abroad! I'm feared to take the road now."

"Come, come; this won't do at all!" said Smith, returning to the table. "Take a good swig o' your beer. Give ye comfort. Ye should never ha' gone to the hangin' this mornin'."

Said Butters, still shaking: "I tell ye—in yon flash I saw Jacob Forge, and he was hung—hung on a—a thread o' scarlet!"

Migsworth and Smith started, and exchanged uneasy glances.

Migsworth cleared his throat. "Tut, tut!" he said; and again, "Tut, tut!"

Said Butters, in a low, frantic voice: "Nothin' but a thread o' scarlet—and he was dead, and starin', and his head all sideways—but he was sort o' smilin' to himself, as if——"

"Smilin'!" exclaimed Smith, horrified.

"Hush!" said Migsworth, as the door opened.

A STRANGER came in, followed by the landlord, and began to remove his wet wraps.

"Oh, this will do," he said, impatiently. "Have a bedroom fired for me, and another for my man. But first let me have a double 'Scotch,' some boiling water, sugar, and lemon." He threw his things on a chair, went over to the fire, and stood there, chafing his hands.

"Very good, sir," said the landlord, going out.

There was a pause, during which Migsworth and Smith glanced at the stranger and at each other. Butters, chin on chest, took no notice.

Suddenly from the night came a scream of wind and a rattling on the window. Smith leapt, Migsworth started, but Butters paid no attention.

"Only hail. The thunder's brought it down." Migsworth addressed the remark to the stranger's back.

Said Butters dreamily: "Hung by a thread o' scarlet and smilin'—smilin' the smile"—his voice almost failed—"o' an innocent man."

"Oh, my!" said Smith, softly, looking at the stranger's back.

Migsworth leaned over and patted Butters on the shoulder. "Don't you worry about it, old man," he said soothingly, and winked at Smith. "I'm beginnin' to think he must ha' been loadin' up before he came along to the Rainbow." He cleared

his throat and addressed the stranger. "Terrible night, sir."

The stranger turned. "Horrible! I trust," he said with dry courtesy, "I am not intruding here. Only room with a fire going."

"Not at all, sir," Migsworth replied in his best manner. "'Tis a public room, sir, and if 'twas private ye'd be welcome on such a night."

"Much obliged, I'm sure." The stranger's manner seemed to thaw with his hands. He took a chair at the hearth, yawned, produced a silver case and selected a cigarette, watched the while with furtive interest by Migsworth and Smith. "There's a village about here, isn't there?" he inquired, as he dropped the match into the fire.

"Two, sir," answered Migsworth. "Lower Ashley and Upper Ashley. This inn is midway betwixt them."

"I see! If you reside here, perhaps you can tell me whether the population includes a tall man who is stone-deaf—possibly dumb also?"

"Oh, dear, no, sir," replied Migsworth.

"But," put in Smith hopefully, "we've got a paralytic, sir."

"H'm! This man was apparently bound for one or other of the Ashleys—at least, we encountered him not far from this inn—and he gave my chauffeur and myself the shock of our lives."

"How was that, sir?" Migsworth asked respectfully.

Here Mr. Flett entered with a tray, which he set on a small table at the new customer's elbow.

"Thanks," said the stranger, and proceeded to mix his toddy. "Well, in the midst of a blizzard, our lamps showed him walking in the middle of the road. We kept sounding the horn, a pretty powerful one, and the wind was on his back, but he took no notice. We slowed, and my man was going to risk the ditch, when the fellow stepped aside, and we carried on. Next moment he was back in the middle of the road." The speaker paused and took a cautious sip of the steaming mixture.

The landlord, who had moved to the door, halted there, listening for the rest of the story.

"IT was the nearest thing!" the stranger resumed. "Of course, we braked hard, but I swear the bonnet touched him, when the car stopped with a jerk that, I really thought, had finished her. And the fellow walked on, without so much as turning his head."

"My gracious!" cried Migsworth. "Did anyone ever hear the like? What did you do, sir?"

"Shouted to him to stop, but again he paid no attention. I think he must have left the road soon after, for when we got going once more—the car had suffered, you understand; that's why I'm here—there was no further sign of him. But"—grimly—"I'd like very much to meet him again."

"Sounds like a loony, sir," said Migsworth. "And ye never saw his face?"

"Nothing but his back." The stranger sipped his toddy. "A tall man, as I've said, in a long, black tarpaulin coat and soft felt hat."

"Plenty o' tarpaulins and soft felts—old ones—hereabouts," observed Smith, seizing the chance of getting in a word.

"He had a heavy muffler coming above his coat collar, as though to shield the back of his head from the blast. I noted it in the lamplight—a scarlet muffler."

At the utterance of the last two words Smith started as though knifed, while Migsworth screeched, "A *what?*"

"A scarlet muffler!" shouted the landlord, clutching the edge of the door, and Butters moved as one in a doze.

The stranger stared. "Yes, a scarlet muffler. Odd taste, no doubt. Still—— But, I say, what's the matter with your friend?" His gaze was on Butters.

Said Butters, hazily: "Hung on a thread o' scarlet, he was, and smilin'——"

"Kindly excuse him, sir," said Migsworth. "Unknown to us he has got rather too much."

"Smilin' the smile of an——"

"Come, come, old man!" Migsworth murmured anxiously.

As though hearing him not, Butters turned slowly to the stranger and extended a quivering forefinger. "'Twas a ghost ye saw this night," he mumbled; "the ghost o' Jacob Forge, who was hung for murder this mornin' in Lakeford Jail. And he was hung on a thread o' that same scarlet muffler—God rest his soul!"

Having said this, Mr. Butters relapsed into his inert condition.

The stranger addressed Migsworth. "This is rather beyond me," he said. "Incidentally, I should say that your friend is suffering, not from any over-indulgence, but from some severe mental and nervous strain."

Smith managed to anticipate Migsworth.

"'Tis like enough ye're right, sir. William Butters is a sober man, and as honest as any grocer could be, in these hard times. Has had his difficulties, he has, but he's come through them. But he should never ha' gone to see the black flag hoisted this mornin'. Ye see, sir, he had the ill-luck to be one o' the jury that sent Jacob Forge, our neighbour—though not our friend—to the gallows, and he don't seem to get over

"In the midst of a blizzard our lamps showed him walking in the middle of the road."

the idea. To-night he has started sayin' to himself: 'What if me and the judge was wrong?'"

The stranger nodded sympathetically. "And this Jacob Forge—and the scarlet muffler?"

"Why, sir," began Smith——

"In the winter-time," Migsworth firmly interposed, "Jacob Forge always wore the scarlet muffler—he was known by it, there being nothin' like it in the neighbourhood. And on a dark winter's night, on the high road, he murdered an old farmer comin' home from market wi' a bag o' money—near four hundred pound. Beat in the old man's head wi' a hammer, so he did!"

"I knew that money-bag," said Smith. "Seen it often in my shop. Made o' blue canvas——"

"Same here," said the landlord. "Farmer Jukes never passed my door."

"And," hastened Smith, "they found the hammer hid in Forge's tool-shed, wi' blood and a grey hair or so on it. And they found three cheques belongin' to the farmer there also. But the bag o' notes and cash they never found; Forge must ha' hid it too safe, or destroyed it. And 'twas proved that Forge was needin' money at the time. We all was, for that matter. Of course, at the trial he denied everything; swore he was sleepin' in his bed when it happened."

THE speaker paused for refreshment, and Migsworth took up the tale.

"But, sir, it was the scarlet muffler that did for him in the end! He must ha' hid it, or burned it, for 'twas never found. He declared he had lost it; thought he had dropped it in one o' the village shops, but couldn't say which——"

"But in the farmer's nails," Smith interposed, wiping his moustache, "they found a thread o' it! So 'tis true enough, sir, that Jacob Forge was hung on a thread o' scarlet!"

The landlord, with an apologetic cough, took a step forward.

"It should be told, sir, that, even after he was condemned, Forge always believed—or pretended to believe—that somethin' would happen to save him. But"—a headshake—"the black flag went up, sure enough, at eight o'clock this mornin'. I didn't know Forge—he never was in the Rainbow—but I allow it has been a sorrowful day."

Out in the passage a clock heavily and solemnly struck ten.

"Bound to cast a gloom over the place," the stranger remarked. "Was this Jacob Forge married?"

Migsworth, on the alert, replied: "No, sir. He had no friends, exceptin' a man called Breen—a solitudinarian like himself, who has, unfortunately, been tryin' to drown his grief ever since, as Mr. Flett there will confirm."

"Too true, sir, though I ha' done my best to check it." Mr. Flett took out his watch. "Well, gentlemen, I'm real sorry, but the Law must be obeyed."

Migsworth sighed and emptied his tankard.

"Your clock's fast, Mr. Flett," said Smith, who had already drained his. "Considerin' the day it has been, and considerin' the night it is—hark to that blast!—Mr. Migsworth and me ought to have just one more. We'll take it standin', if ye like."

The landlord held up the stout and ancient silver watch. "Correct time's here, gentlemen; very sorry indeed."

They rose reluctantly, and Migsworth was about to arouse Butters, now in a sort of lethargy, when the stranger spoke.

"Perhaps you gentlemen will give me your company, as my guests, a little longer." Their smiles were sufficient acceptance. "Right! Two pints, landlord."

"Very good, sir. But if ye'll excuse me, I'll lock up first," said Mr. Flett, and retired.

"Be seated, gentlemen."

"'Tis too kind," murmured Smith, while Migsworth, in his best manner, declared that he was deeply obliged.

"Not at all," said the stranger, politely. "But what about your friend? He's looking worse than ever."

"Best not disturb him, sir. Mr. Smith and me will see him home in due season. He should never ha' been on the jury."

Lighting a fresh cigarette, the stranger asked: "What do you gentlemen think about your friend's ghost theory?"

"Well, sir," answered Migsworth, "I don't believe in ghosts as a general rule——"

"Nor me—ever!" said Smith.

"But, nevertheless, I'd swear there's not a *livin'* man within twenty miles o' the Ashleys would wear a scarlet muffler."

"Hadn't thought o' that," remarked Smith. Then, abruptly, he put up his hand. "I say, there's somebody comin' in! Listen!"

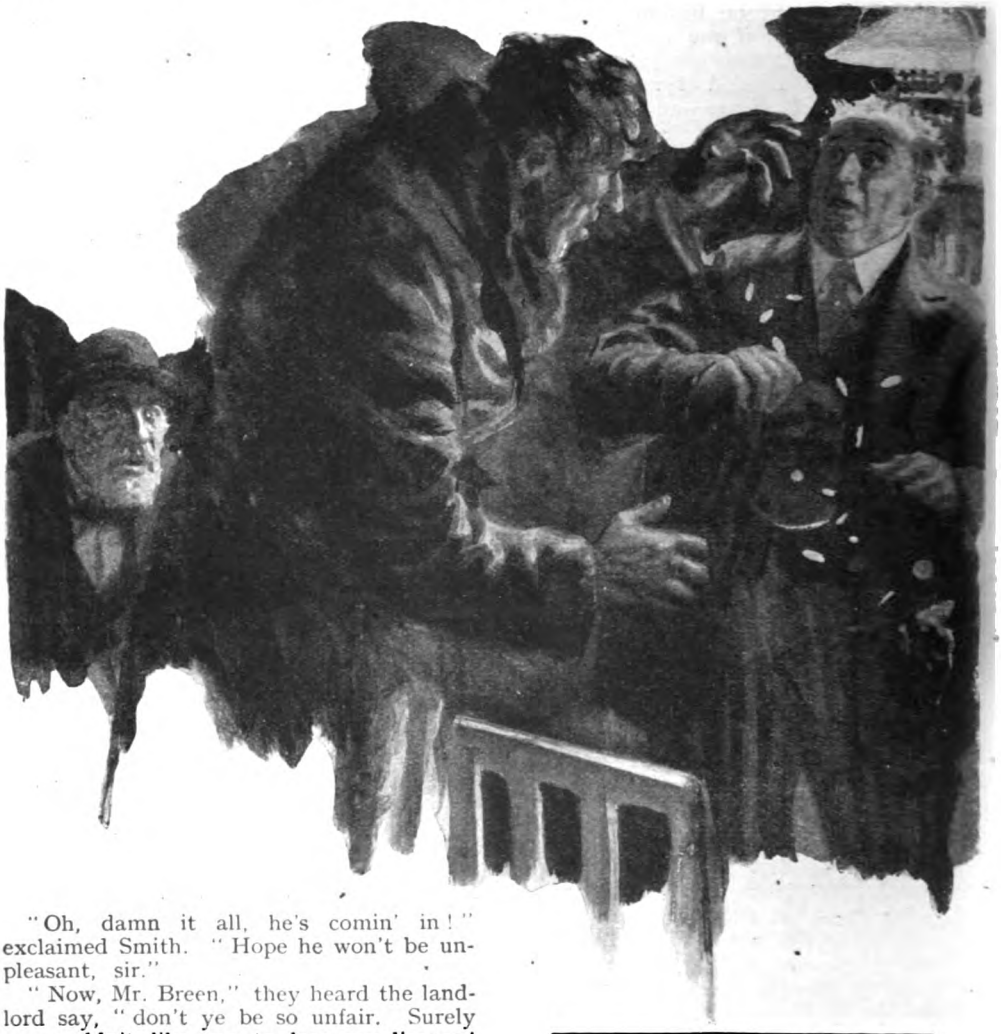
From the passage came the sounds of altercation, and presently the landlord's voice was heard, saying: "No, no; I can't have it. After ten, you know!"

"Oh, Lord," muttered Migsworth, "if it isn't Breen come back!"

"Breen?" said the stranger quickly. "The friend of the murd—the dead man?"

"Yes, sir, and I'm afraid it means trouble for Mr. Flett. Of course, Mr. Flett *can't* serve him now."

The noise came nearer. Breen was cursing; the landlord protesting and imploring.



"Oh, damn it all, he's comin' in!" exclaimed Smith. "Hope he won't be unpleasant, sir."

"Now, Mr. Breen," they heard the landlord say, "don't ye be so unfair. Surely ye wouldn't like me to lose my licence! 'Tis after hours, and if anybody saw ye comin' into the Rainbow . . . Oh, damme, why didn't I lock the door on the stroke?"

"Lemme pass!" stormed a hoarse voice. "Gimme a bottle o' whisky. Got the money. Hear that? I've got the money, curse ye! Ye hear? All right, then; fetch the whisky!"

"Stop, Mr. Breen, stop, for God's sake!"

The sound of a struggle; then:—

"Well, well, if I let ye in for just a minute, will ye promise not to—oh, dear, dear!"

The door flew in. Breen, followed by the dismayed and dishevelled Mr. Flett, entered. He wore a long tarpaulin coat, buttoned to the chin, and streaming wet. He was hatless. His face was chalky, his eyes glazed and staring. He walked in a stiff mechanical fashion to a chair in the corner farthest from the company—his usual place.

Suddenly Breen flung a handful of coins on the floor. "Money! Whisky!"

The stranger drew in his breath. "Good God, what a case!" he muttered, and beckoned to the landlord, who had halted helplessly near the door.

The landlord came on tiptoe.

"Whatever it may cost you," whispered the stranger, "not a drop!"

"Oh, never, sir! But—but *is* he—*is* he drunk?"

"Past drunk! He's on the verge of a—— But never mind that now. Go back to the door. Wait there! Be ready!"

Like a dreadful image Breen for a while sat motionless in the corner. Then in a toneless voice he spoke.

"Poison for the daft jury, and a bottle o' whisky for me."

The stranger, gripping the arms of his chair, leaned forward, watchful. Smith was gaping stupidly behind his foolish moustache. Butters, though not apparently interested, seemed to be coming out of his lethargy.

Migsworth cleared his throat, and behind his hand addressed the stranger. "What about givin' him some strong coffee, sir?"

With some impatience the stranger made a sign for silence.

It was very still in the room, but outside the wind screamed again and a great gust of hail bombarded the window.

"Bottle o' whisky!" said Breen.

Now Butters seemed to realize his presence, for he sat up slowly and gazed in his direction.

A flare of lightning—a crackle of thunder. All the occupants of the smoke-room, save Butters and Breen, started violently. Then, with a sob, the wind died, and there was complete silence till——

"Bottle o' whisky!" said Breen. Presently his expression changed slightly, as though another idea had stirred in his clogged intelligence. "Money! Ye want the money!" Like an automaton, he stood up. The two lowest buttons of the tarpaulin were missing, and drawing aside and upwards the skirt, he got at a pocket. His actions were slow, but not uncertain, the actions of a man under hypnotic rather than ordinary alcoholic influence—so, at least, it appeared.

Breen withdrew his fist, and for a moment or two stood rigid. Suddenly——

"Money!" He flung a handful of coins on the floor. "Money! . . . Whisky!"

No one stirred.

Breen's gaze never shifted, but he stood as one listening intently. At last——

"Not enough money? Eh?" Once more his hand went under the tarpaulin.

This time he fetched forth a large object.

'Bottle o' whisky! Money! . . . Take it!"

At the landlord's feet the blue canvas bag fell with a crash.

And, recoiling a step in sheer horror, as from a viper, the landlord cried :—

"Oh, my good God, the farmer's money-bag!"

Smith, clutching Migsworth's arm, made inarticulate sounds and pointed at the bag. Butters, eyes starting, rose heavily to his feet and stood swaying and clutching the back of his chair, while his lips moved speechlessly.

Breen was speaking again, but his voice had changed. It wavered.

"Bottle o'——" A pause. "Bottle of whi——" A longer pause. "Black flag—black flag—black——" His mouth began to open and shut like that of a gasping fish.

The stranger, rising softly, signalled to the landlord.

Abruptly the gasping action ceased, the mouth remaining wide. Breen took two mechanical steps forward.

The stranger and the landlord stole nearer.

Breen rose on his toes.

"Look out!" snapped the stranger—none too soon—at the landlord.

Something seemed to give and Breen pitched forward, to be caught by ready arms.

"Quick! Into the chair!" said the stranger. "Now off with his coat!"

He proceeded to undo the buttons, and threw it open—exposing a scarlet muffler drawn across the breast.

"Why, it's the man I nearly—well, I'm——"

The landlord with a gurgling noise staggered backwards, and, while Migsworth's hands went to his face, from Smith came the words, in a high falsetto :—

"Oh, oh, oh!—the farmer's money-bag—and the scarlet muffler, too!"

"Quiet!" commanded the stranger, and, dropping on his knees, laid his ear to Breen's chest.

After a while he lifted a grave countenance and rose, shaking his head.

In the silence Migsworth uncovered his face. "So Butters' idea was right after all," he said, in a soft, awed voice, and turned to the man he had named, saying: "'Tis a terrible thing for you, Butters, but not a soul could blame ye, and—and here's my hand."

Butters neither heard nor saw the kindly offer. For a moment or two he stood rigid, his countenance congested; then, of a sudden, he reeled forward three paces and stopped, one hand to his head, the other pointing shakily, accusingly, down at the still figure with the scarlet muffler.

"Breen, ye blasted thief," he croaked, "ye've been burglin' my safe!"

Now all was still, even Nature. Then slowly, on tiptoe, with fearful countenances, Migsworth, Smith, and the landlord drew away from Butters.

Only the stranger held his ground and, at last, spoke: "You double-murderer!"

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 164.

FROM these, which come in spring and summer time,
We might expect to hear a faery chime.

1. Curtail a Hebridean Spotted Field,
So named from summer flowers it did yield.
2. I offer you a rosebud here, which yet
Has also been described as mignonette.
3. May play some part in banishing a rogue,
And often has a quite attractive brogue.
4. If to address a man as this you chose,
That you were seeing red I should suppose.
5. A most cold-blooded light, beyond all doubt:
I asked for this, and I received a pout.
6. One name's four-footed. Take his other one,
And then remove a third. You have? Well done!
7. A leader of Society, I claim,
But the first letter's missing from his name.
8. What dog delights to do? No, choose instead
A synonym; curtail it and behead.
9. Losing their heads completely, 'tis the doom
Of some to share close quarters in their tomb.

BOODLEBAR.

Answers to Acrostic No. 164 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on March 12th.*

Two answers may be sent to every light.

It is essential that solvers, with their answers to this acrostic, should send also their real names and addresses.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 163.

(The Third of the Series.)

A SUIT on either side, the red one leads;
On either side a suit, the black succeeds.

1. A famous battle, centuries ago,
Where fatal arrow laid the Saxon low.
2. Surround, enwrap, hide, cover, or enfold;
One letter more, a letter it may hold.
3. The sister of the Skylark, may we say?
Whom Wren and Fieldfare thus alike display.
4. Part is a circuit, part may be on beer,
Antagonistic to the Cavalier.
5. Two thirds was half whose father was a Greek;
The whole a garment tells us where to seek.
6. Nine may be saved by one, if 'tis in time;
Bacon and trenches, both provide a rhyme.

PAX.

1. H	asting	S
2. E	nvelo	P
3. A	rethus	A
4. R	oundhea	D
5. T	yron	E
6. S	titche	S

NOTES.—Light 2. Envelope. 3. Shelley's poems, The Skylark, Arethusa. The second line of the couplet reveals the answer. 5. Tyro, in Greek mythology. Ulster. 6. A stitch in time.

Solvers who write to the Acrostic Editor and desire answers to their queries should, with their letters, enclose stamped addressed envelopes, and he will endeavour to reply.

ATOUCHE THE APACHE

nazing Story of the Paris Underworld

THE STRAND MAGAZINE

New Adventure of
SHERLOCK HOLMES
By
CONAN DOYLE

TO OPEN

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Hiss-ss!

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THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for April, 1927.

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Frontispiece: Holmes had lit his lantern, which shot a tiny funnel of vivid yellow light upon the mournful scene.

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THE CIGARETTE THAT SET A STANDARD

Cavanders Ltd. (Established 1775). *Pioneers of the Fourfold Pack*

To face back of Frontispiece.

The STRAND MAGAZINE

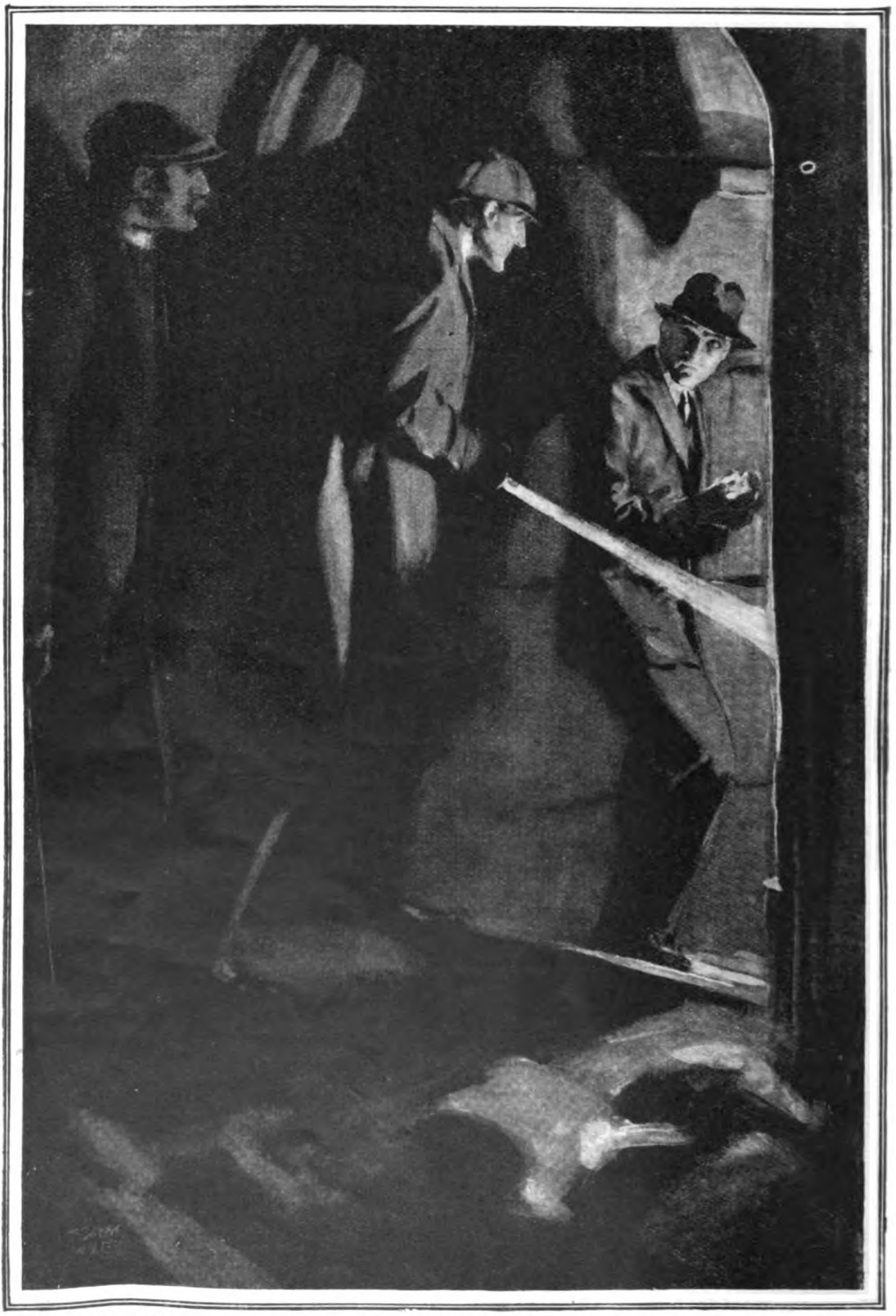
APRIL, 1927.

Next Month:

"The Story of William"

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE



HOLMES HAD LIT HIS LANTERN, WHICH SHOT A TINY TUNNEL OF VIVID YELLOW LIGHT UPON THE MOURNFUL SCENE.

(See page 323)

A NEW SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY

THE ADVENTURE OF SHOSCOMBE OLD PLACE

BY

A. Conan Doyle

Illustrated by
FRANK WILES

SHERLOCK HOLMES had been bending for a long time over a low-power microscope. Now he straightened himself up and looked round at me in triumph.

"It is glue, Watson," said he. "Unquestionably it is glue. Have a look at these scattered objects in the field!"

I stooped to the eyepiece and focused for my vision.

"Those hairs are threads from a tweed coat. The irregular grey masses are dust. There are epithelial scales on the left. Those brown blobs in the centre are undoubtedly glue."

"Well," I said, laughing, "I am prepared to take your word for it. Does anything depend upon it?"

"It is a very fine demonstration," he answered. "In the St. Pancras case you may remember that a cap was found beside the dead policeman. The accused man denies that it is his. But he is a picture-frame maker who habitually handles glue."

"Is it one of your cases?"

"No; my friend, Merivale of the Yard, asked me to look into the case. Since I ran down that coiner by the zinc and copper filings in the seam of his cuff they have begun to realize the importance of the microscope." He looked impatiently at his watch. "I had a new client calling, but he is overdue. By the way, Watson, you know something of racing?"

"I ought to. I pay for it with about half my wound pension."

"Then I'll make you my 'Handy Guide to the Turf.' What about Sir Robert Norberton? Does the name recall anything?"

"Well, I should say so. He lives at Shoscombe Old Place, and I know it well, for my summer quarters were down there once. Norberton nearly came within your province once."

"How was that?"

"It was when he horsewhipped Sam Brewer, the well-known Curzon Street money-lender, on Newmarket Heath. He nearly killed the man."

"Ah, he sounds interesting! Does he often indulge in that way?"

"Well, he has the name of being a dangerous man. He is about the most daredevil rider in England—second in the Grand National a few years back. He is one of those men who have overshot their true generation. He should have been a buck in the days of the Regency—a boxer, an athlete, a plunger on the Turf, a lover of fair ladies, and, by all account, so far down Queer Street that he may never find his way back again."

"Capital, Watson! A thumb-nail

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sketch. I seem to know the man. Now, can you give me some idea of Shoscombe Old Place ? "

"Only that it is in the centre of Shoscombe Park, and that the famous Shoscombe stud and training quarters are to be found there."

"And the head trainer," said Holmes, "is John Mason. You need not look surprised at my knowledge, Watson, for this is a letter from him which I am unfolding. But let us have some more about Shoscombe. I seem to have struck a rich vein."

"There are the Shoscombe spaniels," said I. "You hear of them at every dog-show. The most exclusive breed in England. They are the special pride of the lady of Shoscombe Old Place."

"Sir Robert Norberton's wife, I presume!"

"Sir Robert has never married. Just as well, I think, considering his prospects. He lives with his widowed sister, Lady Beatrice Falder."

"You mean that she lives with him ? "

"No, no. The place belonged to her late husband, Sir James. Norberton has no claim on it at all. It is only a life interest and reverts to her husband's brother. Meantime, she draws the rents every year."

"And brother Robert, I suppose, spends the said rents ? "

"That is about the size of it. He is a devil of a fellow and must lead her a most uneasy life. Yet I have heard that she is devoted to him. But what is amiss at Shoscombe ? "

"Ah, that is just what I want to know. And here, I expect, is the man who can tell us."

THE door had opened and the page had shown in a tall, clean-shaven man with the firm, austere expression which is only seen upon those who have to control horses or boys. Mr. John Mason had many of both under his sway, and he looked equal to the task. He bowed with cold self-possession and seated himself upon the chair to which Holmes had waved him.

"You had my note, Mr. Holmes ? "

"Yes, but it explained nothing."

"It was too delicate a thing for me to put the details on paper. And too complicated. It was only face to face I could do it."

"Well, we are at your disposal."

"First of all, Mr. Holmes, I think that my employer, Sir Robert, has gone mad."

Holmes raised his eyebrows. "This is Baker Street, not Harley Street," said he. "But why do you say so ? "

"Well, sir, when a man does one queer thing, or two queer things, there may be a meaning to it, but when everything he does is queer, then you begin to wonder. I believe Shoscombe Prince and the Derby have turned his brain."

"That is a colt you are running ? "

"The best in England, Mr. Holmes. I should know, if anyone does. Now, I'll be plain with you, for I know you are gentlemen of honour and that it won't go beyond the room. Sir Robert has *got* to win this Derby. He's up to the neck, and it's his last chance. Everything he could raise or borrow is on the horse—and at fine odds, too! You can get forties now, but it was nearer the hundred when he began to back him."

"But how is that, if the horse is so good ? "

"The public don't know how good he is. Sir Robert has been too clever for the touts. He has the Prince's half-brother out for spins. You can't tell 'em apart. But there are two lengths in a furlong between them when it comes to a gallop. He thinks of nothing but the horse and the race. His whole life is on it. He's holding off the Jews till then. If the Prince fails him, he is done."

"It seems a rather desperate gamble, but where does the madness come in ? "

"Well, first of all, you have only to look at him. I don't believe he sleeps at night. He is down at the stables at all hours. His eyes are wild. It has all been too much for his nerves. Then there is his conduct to Lady Beatrice ! "

"Ah, what is that ? "

"They have always been the best of friends. They had the same tastes, the two of them, and she loved the horses as much as he did. Every day at the same hour she would drive down to see them—and, above all, she loved the Prince. He would prick up his ears when he heard the wheels on the gravel, and he would trot out each morning to the carriage to get his lump of sugar. But that's all over now."

"Why ? "

"Well, she seems to have lost all interest in the horses. For a week now she has driven past the stables with never so much as 'good morning' ! "

"You think there has been a quarrel ? "

"And a bitter, savage, spiteful quarrel at that. Why else would he give away her pet spaniel, that she loved as if he were her child ? He gave it a few days ago to old Barnes, what keeps the Green Dragon, three miles off, at Crendall."

"That certainly did seem strange."

"Of course, with her weak heart and dropsy one couldn't expect that she could get about with him, but he spent two hours every evening in her room. He might well do what he could, for she has been a rare good friend to him. But that's all over, too. He never goes near her. And she

takes it to heart. She is brooding and sulky and drinking, Mr. Holmes—drinking like a fish."

"Did she drink before this estrangement?"

"Well, she took her glass, but now it is often a whole bottle of an evening. So Stephens, the butler, told me. It's all changed, Mr. Holmes, and there is something damned rotten about it. But then, again, what is master doing down at the old church crypt at night? And who is the man that meets him there?"

Holmes rubbed his hands.

"Go on, Mr. Mason. You get more and more interesting."

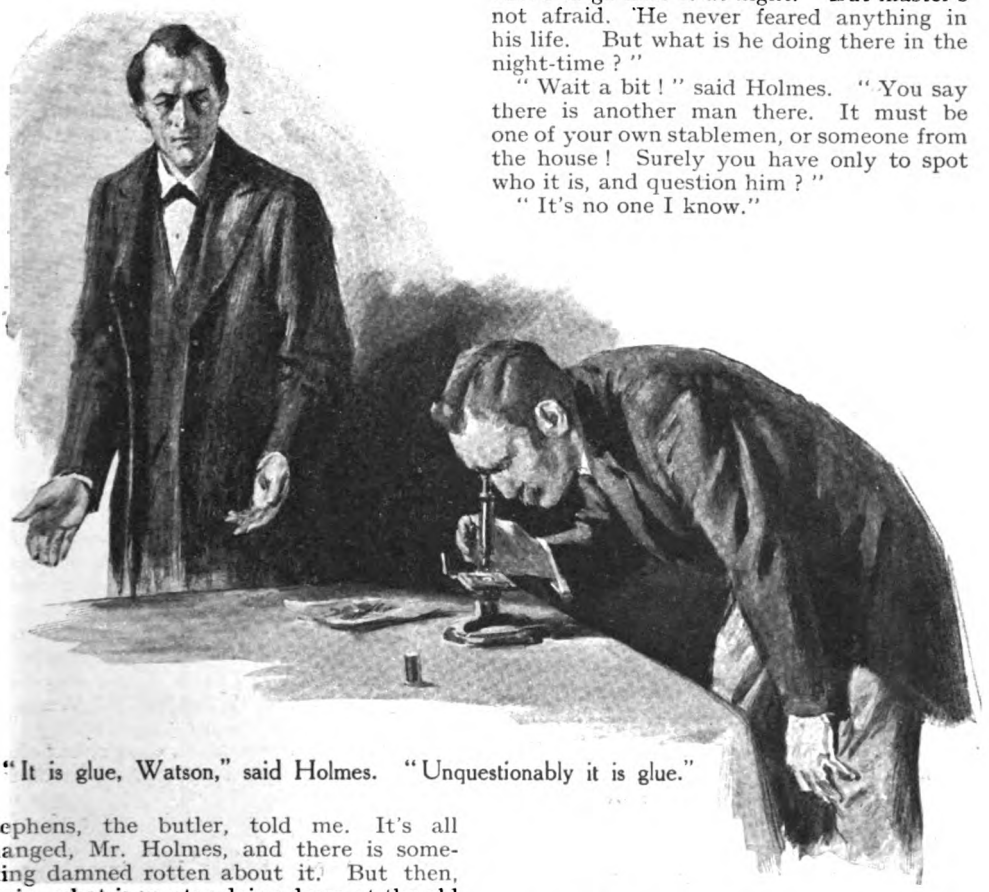
"It was the butler who saw him go. Twelve o'clock at night and raining hard. So next night I was up at the house and, sure enough, master was off again. Stephens and I went after him, but it was jumpy work, for it would have been a bad job if he had seen us. He's a terrible man with his fists if he gets started, and no respecter of persons. So we were shy of getting too near, but we marked him down all right. It was the haunted crypt that he was making for, and there was a man waiting for him there."

"What is this haunted crypt?"

"Well, sir, there is an old ruined chapel in the park. It is so old that nobody could fix its date. And under it there's a crypt which has a bad name among us. It's a dark, damp, lonely place by day, but there are few in that county that would have the nerve to go near it at night. But master's not afraid. He never feared anything in his life. But what is he doing there in the night-time?"

"Wait a bit!" said Holmes. "You say there is another man there. It must be one of your own stablemen, or someone from the house! Surely you have only to spot who it is, and question him?"

"It's no one I know."



"It is glue, Watson," said Holmes. "Unquestionably it is glue."

"How can you say that?"

"Because I have seen him, Mr. Holmes. It was on that second night. Sir Robert turned and passed us—me and Stephens, quaking in the bushes like two bunny-rabbits, for there was a bit of moon that night. But we could hear the other moving about behind. We were not afraid of him. So we up when Sir Robert was gone, and pretended we were just having a walk like in the moonlight, and so we came right on him as casual and innocent as you please. 'Hullo, mate! who may you be?' says I. I guess he had not heard us coming, so he looked over his shoulder with a face as if he had seen the Devil coming out of hell. He let out a yell, and away he went as hard as he could lick it in the darkness. He could

run !—I'll give him that. In a minute he was out of sight and hearing, and who he was, or what he was, we never found."

"But you saw him clearly in the moonlight ?"

"Yes. I would swear to his yellow face—a mean dog, I should say. What could he have in common with Sir Robert ?"

Holmes sat for some time lost in thought.

"Who keeps Lady Beatrice Falder company ?" he asked at last.

"There is her maid, Carrie Evans. She has been with her this five years."

"And is, no doubt, devoted ?"

Mr. Mason shuffled uncomfortably.

"She's devoted enough," he answered at last. "But I won't say to whom."

"Ah !" said Holmes.

"I can't tell tales out of school."

"I quite understand, Mr. Mason. Of course, the situation is clear enough. From Dr. Watson's description of Sir Robert I can realize that no woman is safe from him. Don't you think the quarrel between brother and sister may lie there ?"

"Well, the scandal has been pretty clear for a long time."

"But she may not have seen it before. Let us suppose that she has suddenly found it out. She wants to get rid of the woman. Her brother will not permit it. The invalid, with her weak heart and inability to get about, has no means of enforcing her will. The hated maid is still tied to her. The lady refuses to speak, sulks, takes to drink. Sir Robert in his anger takes her pet spaniel away from her. Does not all this hang together ?"

"Well, it might do— so far as it goes."

"Exactly ! As far as it goes. How would all that bear upon the visits by night to the old crypt ? We can't fit that into our plot."

"No, sir, and there is something more that I can't fit in. Why should Sir Robert want to dig up a dead body ?"

Holmes sat up abruptly.

"We only found it out yesterday—after I had written to you. Yesterday Sir Robert had gone to London, so Stephens and I went down to the crypt. It was all in order, sir, except that in one corner was a bit of a human body."

"You informed the police, I suppose ?"

Our visitor smiled grimly.

"Well, sir, I think it would hardly interest them. It was just the head and a few bones of a mummy. It may have been a thousand years old. But it wasn't there before. That I'll swear, and so will Stephens. It had been stowed away in a corner and covered over with a board, but that corner had always been empty before."

"What did you do with it ?"

"Well, we just left it there."

"That was wise. You say Sir Robert was away yesterday. Has he returned ?"

"We expect him back to-day."

"When did Sir Robert give away his sister's dog ?"

"It was just a week ago to-day. The creature was howling outside the old wellhouse, and Sir Robert was in one of his tantrums that morning. He caught it up, and I thought he would have killed it. Then he gave it to Sandy Bain, the jockey, and told him to take the dog to old Barnes at the Green Dragon, for he never wished to see it again."

HOLMES sat for some time in silent thought. He had lit the oldest and foulest of his pipes.

"I am not clear yet what you want me to do in this matter, Mr. Mason," he said at last. "Can't you make it more definite ?"

"Perhaps this will make it more definite, Mr. Holmes," said our visitor.

He took a paper from his pocket and, unwrapping it carefully, exposed a charred fragment of bone.

Holmes examined it with interest.

"Where did you get it ?"

"There is a central heating furnace in the cellar under Lady Beatrice's room. It's been off for some time, but Sir Robert complained of cold and had it on again. Harvey runs it—he's one of my lads. This very morning he came to me with this, which he found raking out the cinders. He didn't like the look of it."

"Nor do I," said Holmes. "What do you make of it, Watson ?"

It was burned to a black cinder, but there could be no question as to its anatomical significance.

"It's the upper condyle of a human femur," said I.

"Exactly !" Holmes had become very serious. "When does this lad tend to the furnace ?"

"He makes it up every evening and then leaves it."

"Then anyone could visit it during the night ?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can you enter it from outside ?"

"There is one door from outside. There is another which leads up by a stair to the passage in which Lady Beatrice's room is situated."

"These are deep waters, Mr. Mason; deep, and rather dirty. You say that Sir Robert was not at home last night ?"

"No, sir."

"Then, whoever was burning bones, it was not he."

"That's true, sir."

"What is the name of that inn you spoke of?"

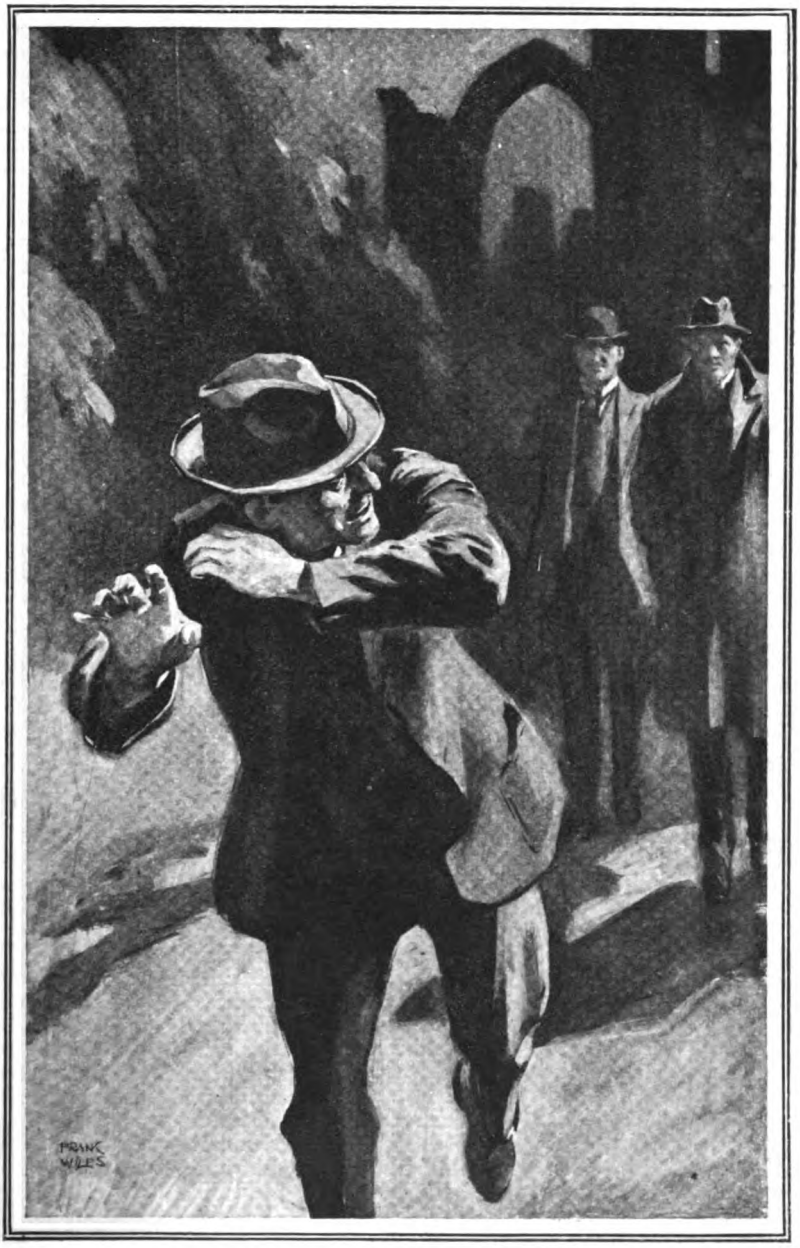
"The Green Dragon."

"Is there good fishing in that part of Berkshire?"

The honest trainer showed very clearly upon his face that he was convinced that yet another lunatic had come into his harassed life.

"Well, sir, I've heard there are trout in the mill stream and pike in the Hall lake."

"That's good enough. Watson and I are famous fishermen—are we not, Watson? You may address us in future at the Green Dragon. We should reach it to-night. I need not say that we don't want to see you, Mr. Mason, but a note will reach us, and no doubt I could find you if I want you. When we have gone a little farther into the matter I will let you have a considered opinion."



"I guess he had not heard us coming. He let out a yell, and away he went as hard as he could lick."

THUS it was that on a bright May evening Holmes and I found ourselves alone in a first-class carriage, and bound for the little "halt-on-demand" station of Shoscombe. The rack above us was covered with a formidable litter of rods, reels, and baskets. On reaching our destination a short drive took us to an old-fashioned tavern, where a sporting host, Josiah Barnes, entered eagerly into our plans for the extirpation of the fish of the neighbourhood.

"What about the Hall lake and the chance of a pike?" said Holmes.

The face of the innkeeper clouded.

"That wouldn't do, sir. You might chance to find yourself in the lake before you were through."

"How's that, then?"

"It's Sir Robert, sir. He's terrible jealous of touts. If you two strangers were as near his training quarters as that he'd be after you as sure as fate. He ain't taking no chances, Sir Robert ain't."

"I've heard he has a horse entered for the Derby."

"Yes, and a good colt, too. He carries all our money for the race, and all Sir Robert's into the bargain. By the way"—he looked at us with thoughtful eyes—"I suppose you ain't on the Turf yourselves?"

"No, indeed. Just two weary Londoners who badly need some good Berkshire air."

"Well, you are in the right place for that. There is a deal of it lying about. But mind what I have told you about Sir Robert. He's the sort that strikes first and speaks afterwards. Keep clear of the park."

"Surely, Mr. Barnes! We certainly shall. By the way, that was a most beautiful spaniel that was whining in the hall."

"I should say it was. That was the real Shoscombe breed. There ain't a better in England."

"I am a dog-fancier myself," said Holmes. "Now, if it is a fair question, what would a prize dog like that cost?"

"More than I could pay, sir. It was Sir Robert himself who gave me this one. That's why I have to keep it on a lead. It would be off to the Hall in a jiffy if I gave it its head."

"We are getting some cards in our hand, Watson," said Holmes, when the landlord had left us. "It's not an easy one to play, but we may see our way in a day or two. By the way, Sir Robert is still in London, I hear. We might, perhaps, enter the sacred domain to-night without fear of bodily assault. There are one or two points on which I should like reassurance."

"Have you any theory, Holmes?"

"Only this, Watson, that *something* happened a week or so ago which has cut deep into the life of the Shoscombe household. What is that something? We can only guess at it from its effects. They seem to be of a curiously mixed character. But that should surely help us. It is only the colourless, uneventful case which is hopeless.

"LET us consider our data. The brother no longer visits the beloved invalid sister. He gives away her favourite dog. Her *dog*, Watson! Does that suggest nothing to you?"

"Nothing but the brother's spite."

"Well, it might be so. Or—well, there is an alternative. Now, to continue our review of the situation from the time that the quarrel, if there is a quarrel, began. The lady keeps her room, alters her habits, is not seen save when she drives out with her maid, refuses to stop at the stables to greet her favourite horse, and apparently takes to drink. That covers the case, does it not?"

"Save for the business in the crypt."

"That is another line of thought. There are two, and I beg you will not tangle them. Line A, which concerns Lady Beatrice, has a vaguely sinister flavour, has it not?"

"I can make nothing of it."

"Well, now, let us take up line B, which concerns Sir Robert. He is mad keen upon winning the Derby. He is in the hands of the Jews, and may at any moment be sold up and his racing stables seized by his creditors. He is a daring and desperate man. He derives his income from his sister. His sister's maid is his willing tool. So far, we seem to be on fairly safe ground, do we not?"

"But the crypt?"

"Ah, yes, the crypt! Let us suppose, Watson—it is merely a scandalous supposition, a hypothesis put forward for argument's sake—that Sir Robert has done away with his sister."

"My dear Holmes, it is out of the question."

"Very possibly, Watson. Sir Robert is a man of an honourable stock. But you do occasionally find a carrion crow among the eagles. Let us for a moment argue upon this supposition. He could not fly the country until he had realized his fortune, and that fortune could only be realized by bringing off this coup with Shoscombe Prince. Therefore, he has still to stand his ground. To do this he would have to dispose of the body of his victim, and he would also have to find a substitute who would impersonate her. With the maid as his confidante that would not be impossible. The woman's body might be conveyed to the crypt, which is a place so seldom visited, and it might be secretly destroyed at night in the furnace, leaving behind it such evidence as we have already seen. What say you to that, Watson?"

"Well, it is all possible if you grant the original monstrous supposition."

"I think that there is a small experiment which we may try to-morrow, Watson, in order to throw some light on the matter. Meanwhile, if we mean to keep up our characters, I suggest that we have our host in for a glass of his own wine and hold some high converse upon eels and dace, which

seems to be the straight road to his affections. We may chance to come upon some useful local gossip in the process."

IN the morning Holmes discovered that we had come without our spoon bait for jack, which absolved us from fishing for the day. About eleven o'clock we started for a walk, and he obtained leave to take the black spaniel with us.

"This is the place," said he, as we came to two high park gates with heraldic griffins towering above them. "About midday, Mr. Barnes informs me, the old lady takes a drive, and the carriage must slow down while the gates are opened. When it comes through, and before it gathers speed, I want you, Watson, to stop the coachman with some question. Never mind me. I shall stand behind this holly-bush and see what I can see."

It was not a long vigil. Within a quarter of an hour we saw the big open yellow barouche coming down the long avenue, with two splendid, high-stepping grey carriage horses in the shafts. Holmes crouched behind his bush with the dog. I stood unconcernedly swinging a cane in the roadway. A keeper ran out, and the gates swung open.

The carriage had slowed to a walk and I was able to get a good look at the occupants. A highly-coloured young woman with flaxen hair and impudent eyes sat on the left. At her right was an elderly person with rounded back and a huddle of shawls about her face and shoulders which proclaimed the invalid. When the horses reached the high road I held up my hand with an authoritative gesture, and as the coachman pulled up I inquired if Sir Robert was at Shoscombe Old Place.

At the same moment Holmes stepped out and released the spaniel. With a joyous cry it dashed forward to the carriage and sprang upon the step. Then in a moment its eager greeting changed to furious rage, and it snapped at the black skirt above it.

"Drive on! Drive on!" shrieked a harsh voice. The coachman lashed the horses, and we were left standing in the roadway.

"Well, Watson, that's done it," said Holmes, as he fastened the lead to the neck of the excited spaniel. "He thought it was his mistress and he found it was a stranger. Dogs don't make mistakes."

"But it was the voice of a man!" I cried.

"Exactly! We have added one card to our hand, Watson, but it needs careful playing, all the same."

My companion seemed to have no further plans for the day, and we did actually use our fishing tackle in the mill stream, with the result that we had a dish of trout for our supper. It was only after that meal that Holmes showed signs of renewed activity. Once more we found ourselves upon the same road as in the morning which led us to the park gates. A tall, dark figure was awaiting us there, who proved to be our London acquaintance, Mr. John Mason, the trainer.

"Good evening, gentlemen," said he. "I got your note, Mr. Holmes. Sir Robert has not returned yet, but I hear that he is expected to-night."

"How far is this crypt from the house?" asked Holmes.

"A good quarter of a mile."

"Then I think we can disregard him altogether."

"I can't afford to do that, Mr. Holmes. The moment he arrives he will want to see me to get the last news of Shoscombe Prince."

"I see! In that case we must work without you, Mr. Mason. You can show us the crypt and then leave us."

IT was pitch-dark and without a moon, but Mason led us over the grass lands until a dark mass loomed up in front of us which proved to be the ancient chapel. We entered the broken gap which was once the porch, and our guide, stumbling among heaps of loose masonry, picked his way to the corner of the building where a steep stair led down into the crypt. Striking a match, he illuminated the melancholy place—dismal and evil-smelling, with ancient crumbling walls of rough-hewn stone, and piles of coffins, some of lead and some of stone, extending upon one side right up to the arched and groined roof, which lost itself in the shadows above our heads. Holmes had lit his lantern, which shot a tiny tunnel of vivid yellow light upon the mournful scene. Its rays were reflected back from the coffin plates, many of them adorned with the griffin and coronet of this old family, which carried its honours even to the gate of Death.

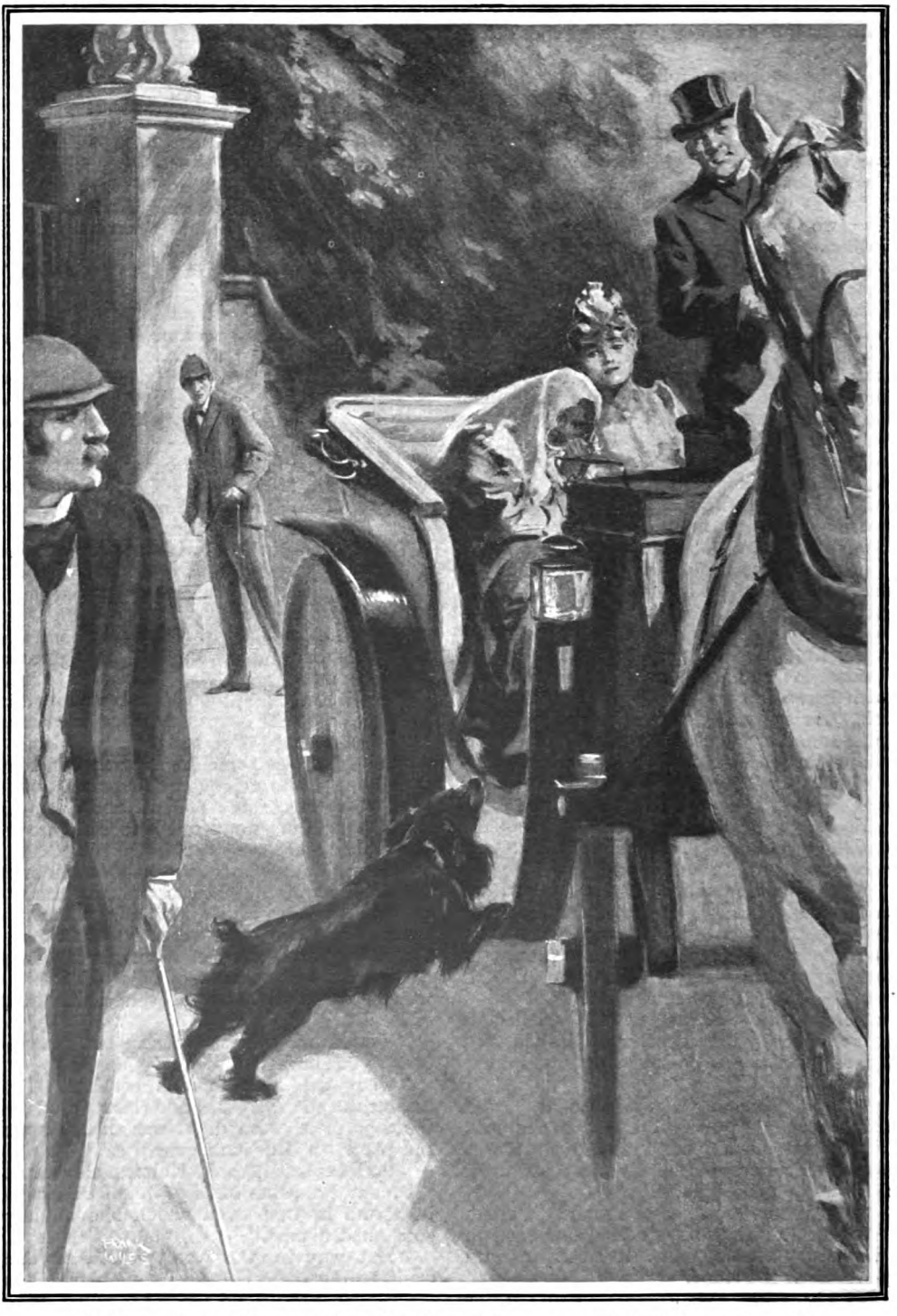
"You spoke of some bones, Mr. Mason. Could you show them before you go?"

"They are here in this corner." The trainer strode across and then stood in silent surprise as our light was turned upon the place. "They are gone," said he.

"So I expected," said Holmes, chuckling. "I fancy the ashes of them might even now be found in that oven which has already consumed a part."

"But why in the world would anyone want to burn the bones of a man who has been dead a thousand years?" asked John Mason.

"That is what we are here to find out,"



Holmes released the spaniel, and with a joyous cry it dashed forward to the carriage and sprang upon the step.

said Holmes. "It may mean a long search, and we need not detain you. I fancy that we shall get our solution before morning."

When John Mason had left us Holmes set to work making a very careful examination of the graves, ranging from a very ancient one, which appeared to be Saxon, in the centre, through a long line of Norman Hugos and Odos, until we reached the Sir William and Sir Denis Falder of the eighteenth century. It was an hour or more before Holmes came to a leaden coffin standing on end before the entrance to the vault. I heard his little cry of satisfaction, and was aware from his hurried but purposeful movements that he had reached a goal. With his lens he was eagerly examining the edges of the heavy lid. Then he drew from his pocket a short jemmy, a box-opener, which he thrust into a chink, levering back the whole front, which seemed to be secured by only a couple of clamps. There was a rending, tearing sound as it gave way, but it had hardly hinged back and partly revealed the contents before we had an unforeseen interruption.

Someone was walking in the chapel above. It was the firm, rapid step of one who came with a definite purpose, and knew well the ground upon which he walked. A light streamed down the stairs, and an instant later the man who bore it was framed in the Gothic archway. He was a terrible figure, huge in stature and fierce in manner. A large stable lantern which he held in front of him shone upwards upon a strong, heavily-moustached face and angry eyes, which glared round him into every recess of the vault, finally fixing themselves with a deadly stare upon my companion and myself.

"Who the devil are you?" he thundered. "And what are you doing upon my property?" Then, as Holmes returned no answer, he took a couple of steps forward and raised a heavy stick which he carried. "Do you hear me?" he cried. "Who are you? What are you doing here?" His cudgel quivered in the air.

But, instead of shrinking, Holmes advanced to meet him.

"I also have a question to ask you, Sir Robert," he said in his sternest tone. "Who is this? And what is it doing here?"

He turned and tore open the coffin lid behind him. In the glare of the lantern I saw a body swathed in a sheet from head to foot, with dreadful, witch-like features, all nose and chin, projecting at one end, the dim glazed eyes staring from a discoloured and crumbling face.

The Baronet had staggered back with a cry and supported himself against a stone sarcophagus.

"How came you to know of this?" he cried. And then, with some return of his truculent manner: "What business is it of yours?"

"My name is Sherlock Holmes," said my companion. "Possibly it is familiar to you. In any case, my business is that of every other good citizen—to uphold the law. It seems to me that you have much to answer for."

Sir Robert glared for a moment, but Holmes's quiet voice and cool, assured manner had their effect.

"'Fore God, Mr. Holmes, it's all right," said he. "Appearances are against me, I'll admit, but I could act no otherwise."

"I should be happy to think so, but I fear your explanations must be for the police."

Sir Robert shrugged his broad shoulders.

"Well, if it must be, it must. Come up to the house and you can judge for yourself how the matter stands."

QUARTER of an hour later we found ourselves in what I judge, from the lines of polished barrels behind glass covers, to be the gun-room of the old house. It was comfortably furnished, and here Sir Robert left us for a few moments. When he returned he had two companions with him: the one, the florid young woman whom we had seen in the carriage; the other, a small, rat-faced man with a disagreeably furtive manner. These two wore an appearance of utter bewilderment, which showed that the Baronet had not yet had time to explain to them the turn events had taken.

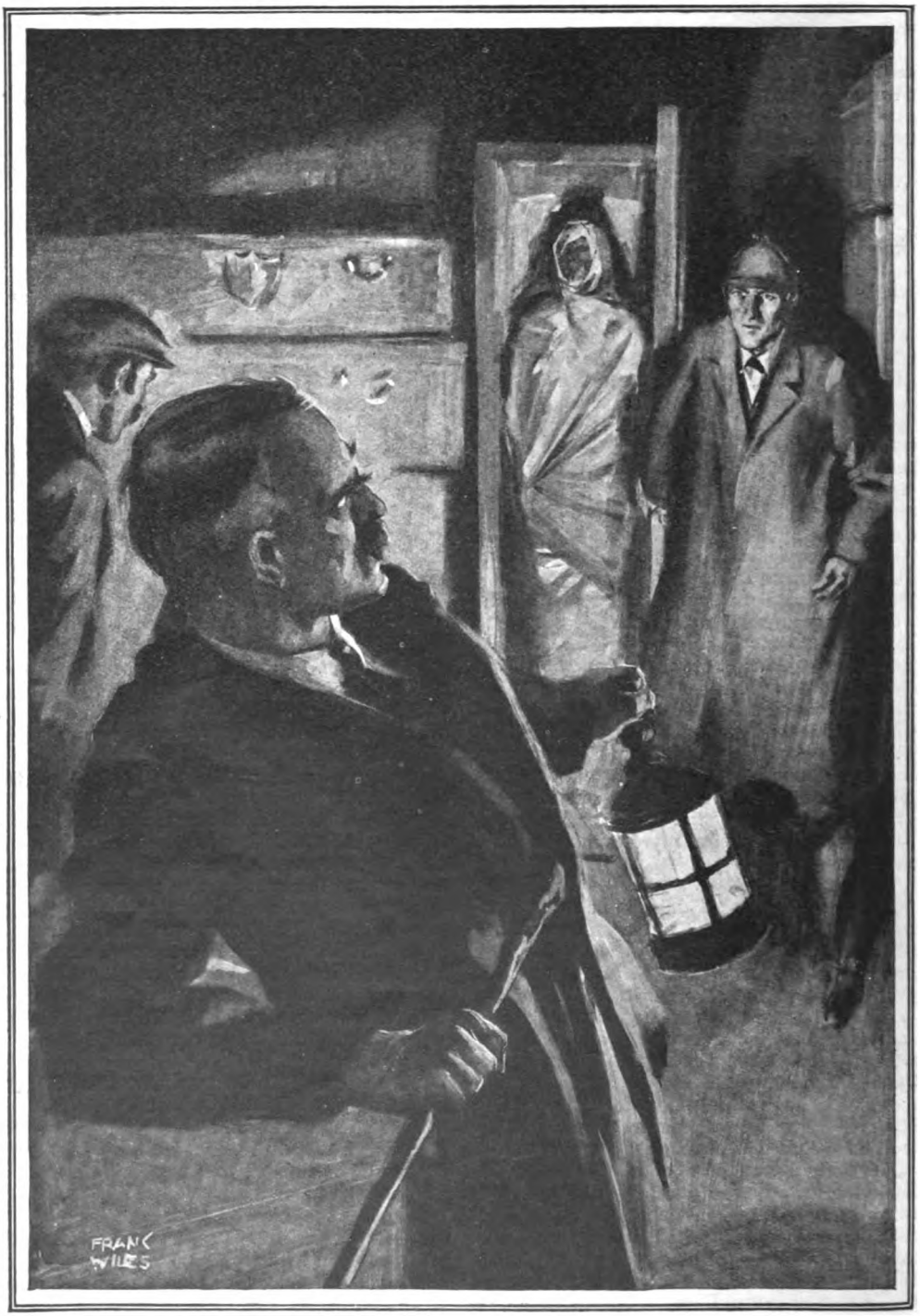
"There," said Sir Robert, with a wave of his hand, "are Mr. and Mrs. Norlett. Mrs. Norlett, under her maiden name of Evans, has for some years been my sister's confidential maid. I have brought them here because I feel that my best course is to explain the true position to you, and they are the two people upon earth who can substantiate what I say."

"Is this necessary, Sir Robert? Have you thought what you are doing?" cried the woman.

"As to me, I entirely disclaim all responsibility," said her husband.

Sir Robert gave him a glance of contempt. "I will take all responsibility," said he. "Now, Mr. Holmes, listen to a plain statement of the facts.

"You have clearly gone pretty deeply into my affairs or I should not have found you where I did. Therefore, you know already, in all probability, that I am running a dark horse for the Derby and that everything depends upon my success. If I win, all is easy. If I lose—well, I dare not think of that!"



"I also have a question to ask you, Sir Robert," said Holmes in his sternest tone. "Who is this? And what is it doing here?"

"I understand the position," said Holmes.

"I am dependent upon my sister, Lady Beatrice, for everything. But it is well known that her interest in the estate is for her own life only. For myself, I am deeply in the hands of the Jews. I have always known that if my sister were to die my creditors would be on to my estate like a flock of vultures. Everything would be seized; my stables, my horses—everything. Well, Mr. Holmes, my sister *did* die just a week ago."

"And you told no one!"

"What could I do? Absolute ruin faced me. If I could stave things off for three weeks all would be well. Her maid's husband—this man here—is an actor. It came into our heads—it came into my head—that he could for that short period personate my sister. It was but a case of appearing daily in the carriage, for no one need enter her room save the maid. It was not difficult to arrange. My sister died of the dropsy which had long afflicted her."

"That will be for a coroner to decide."

"Her doctor would certify that for months her symptoms have threatened such an end."

"Well, what did you do?"

"The body could not remain there. On the first night Norlett and I carried it out to the old well-house, which is now never used. We were followed, however, by her pet spaniel, which yapped continually at the door, so I felt some safer place was needed. I got rid of the spaniel and we carried the body to the crypt of the church. There was no indignity or irreverence, Mr. Holmes. I do not feel that I have wronged the dead."

"Your conduct seems to me inexcusable, Sir Robert."

The Baronet shook his head impatiently. "It is easy to preach," said he. "Perhaps you would have felt differently if you had been in my position. One cannot see all one's hopes and all one's plans shattered at the last moment and make no effort to save them. It seemed to me that it would be no unworthy resting-place if we put her for the time in one of the coffins of her husband's ancestors lying in what is still consecrated ground. We opened such a coffin, removed the contents, and placed her as you have seen her. As to the old relics which we took out, we could not leave them on the floor of the crypt. Norlett and I removed them, and he descended at night and burned them in the central furnace. There is my story, Mr. Holmes, though how you forced my hand so that I have to tell it is more than I can say."

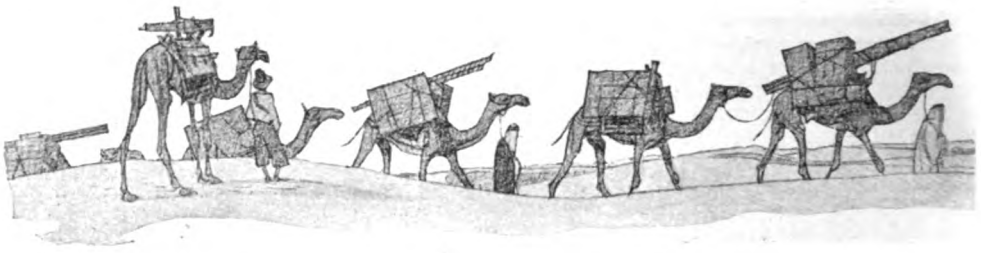
Holmes sat for some time lost in thought.

"There is one flaw in your narrative, Sir Robert," he said at last. "Your bets on the race, and therefore your hopes for the future, would hold good even if your creditors seized your estate."

"The horse would be part of the estate. What do they care for my bets? As likely as not they would not run him at all. My chief creditor is, unhappily, my most bitter enemy—a rascally fellow, Sam Brewer, whom I was once compelled to horsewhip on Newmarket Heath. Do you suppose that he would try to save me?"

"Well, Sir Robert," said Holmes, rising, "this matter must, of course, be referred to the police. It was my duty to bring the facts to light and there I must leave it. As to the morality or decency of your own conduct, it is not for me to express an opinion. It is nearly midnight, Watson, and I think we may make our way back to our humble abode."

IT is generally known now that this singular episode ended upon a happier note than Sir Robert's actions deserved. Shoscombe Prince did win the Derby, the sporting owner did net eighty thousand pounds in bets, and the creditors did hold their hand until the race was over, when they were paid in full, and enough was left to re-establish Sir Robert in a fair position in life. Both police and coroner took a lenient view of the transaction, and, beyond a mild censure for the delay in registering the lady's decease, the lucky owner got away scathless from this strange incident in a career which has now outlived its shadows and ended in an honoured old age.



THE MERRY-GO-ROUND

By

EDGAR JEPSON and FRANK BIRKINSHAW

Illustrated by
L. G. ILLINGWORTH

"WOMEN are the white man's curse," said Erasmus Burnside, and he scowled.

The sentiment, coming from him, was the crowning surprise of an evening of surprises, for in the old days he had been the last word in susceptibility.

"Since when?" said I.

"They're the very devil," he went on. "If it hadn't been for a woman, I should have been a millionaire inside of five years, and now I may have to go on working for a living for the next ten. And I don't like working for a living. I hate it."

He always had. Indeed, in the old days I had never known him work for a living, or really try to. But I looked round the dining-room of his flat, furnished in the best of taste and at the greatest cost, and wondered what kind of a living he was going to work for if this one he was making was not good enough.

With a bitter sigh he raised his long, slim, loose figure from the astonishingly comfortable chair and said: "Come into the smoking-room, and I'll tell you about Effie Robinson and what she did to El-Azrek."

The smoking-room was an Oriental dream wholly in keeping with that evening of surprises. The surprising wire from the long-lost Erasmus inviting me to dine with him at his flat in Mount Street had been the first of them. Erasmus's flat in Mount Street! When I had seen him last, two years after the end of the war, he had been living in a bed-sitting-room at the top of a house in Coram Street, Bloomsbury. The flat itself had been the second, to find that it was not a furnished flat let to him for a few weeks, but that the admirable furniture was his own; that it was his admirable cook who had cooked the admirable dinner; that it was his admirable man who kept my glass brimming with those admirable wines. In that Oriental dream of a smoking-room that admirable and practically noiseless man handed me an admirable Upmann Corona and brought us admirable coffee.

When he went Erasmus stretched himself at fuller length on the divan on which he had dropped and began:—

Yes; but for Effie Robinson I should have been a millionaire inside of five years, he said bitterly, and paused and went on. I suppose you've been wondering what I've been doing for the last six years. Well, I've been trying to civilize savages, and a rotten job it is.

It began with the war, of course. You know that I was attached to the Air Force in Egypt and Arabia because I had taken an Honour Degree in Oriental languages at Oxford. When I was in Arabia I palled up

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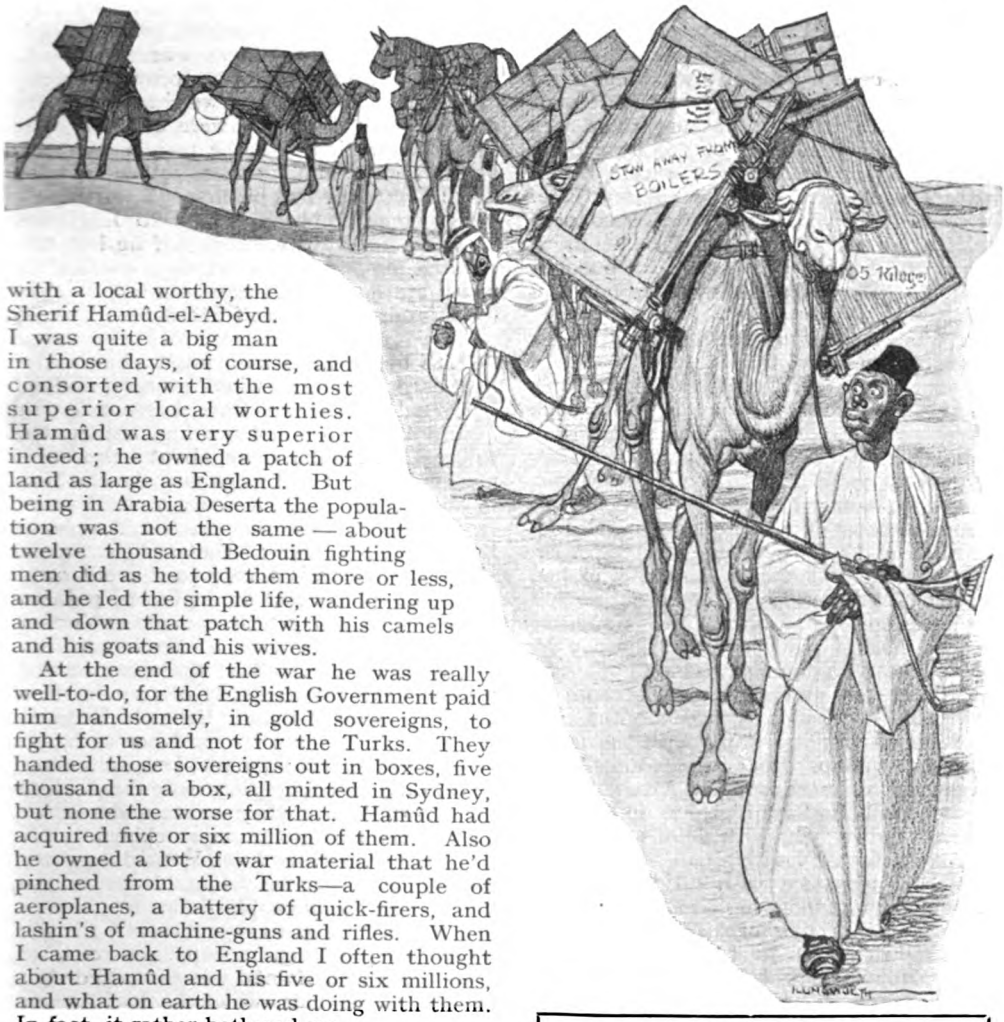


I used all my ninety camels to get the Merry-Go-Round across the desert.

with a local worthy, the Sherif Hamûd-el-Abeyd. I was quite a big man in those days, of course, and consorted with the most superior local worthies. Hamûd was very superior indeed; he owned a patch of land as large as England. But being in Arabia Deserta the population was not the same — about twelve thousand Bedouin fighting men did as he told them more or less, and he led the simple life, wandering up and down that patch with his camels and his goats and his wives.

At the end of the war he was really well-to-do, for the English Government paid him handsomely, in gold sovereigns, to fight for us and not for the Turks. They handed those sovereigns out in boxes, five thousand in a box, all minted in Sydney, but none the worse for that. Hamûd had acquired five or six million of them. Also he owned a lot of war material that he'd pinched from the Turks—a couple of aeroplanes, a battery of quick-firers, and lashin's of machine-guns and rifles. When I came back to England I often thought about Hamûd and his five or six millions, and what on earth he was doing with them. In fact, it rather bothered me.

Then, six years ago, there was nothing doing for an Oriental scholar in this benighted land, and an aunt left me a couple of hundred pounds. I thought I would go and see what Hamûd was doing with all that money, for I knew that he hadn't the slightest idea how to spend it. It would be interesting to know. It never occurred to me then that I could help him to spend it.

I GOT to Hamûd; I knew the way; and he was delighted to see me, for, as I say, we had been uncommonly friendly, and he was a nice chap, though given to fits of childishness: no Bedouin appears to acquire any sense till he's past sixty. I found that he had spent very little of his money—about a hundred thousand—and had got the worst kind of dud European stuff for it, having fallen into the hands of one of those Armenian merchants who wander about twisting the Bedouins. But he was keen on European things; also he was at a loose end, with nothing particular to do, for things were quiet in the northern part of Arabia Deserta for the time being.

I settled down for a stay with him, and I talked to him about things European and encouraged him; I wanted to see how it would work. In about a month I had him rather worked up about civilization and was appointed his confidential adviser to help him get it. I had no notion that it was going to turn out the business it became, or that it would turn me into a hard-working business man.

First of all I made him see that to be civilized you must live in a city, and we chose the ruined city of El-Azrek, which must have been a biggish town when Syria was an important province of the Roman Empire. We chose it because there was plenty of hewn stone to be got by a little digging and plenty of water within reach, or there would never have been a city there. Of course, there were plenty of Soudanese and Nubian slaves among the Bedouins to supply the labour. We began by building Hamûd's palace, one storey high but lots of it.

It was slow work, but I began to get interested. I saw that things could be quickened up a good deal by the judicious use of some of those boxes of gold in Europe to get cement and machinery; and then Hamûd's aeroplanes came in useful. They were good buses, and a Scotch mechanic, named McManus, had stuck by them, out of love of them, I suppose, and married an Arab wife and kept the engines in going order. I got an old pal, called Birket, who had been in the Air Force, to come out to run the buses, and I had been with Hamûd five months when I made my first journey by air to Port Said, taking two boxes of sovereigns with me, and started an account at Lloyds Bank. Inside of three months after that I was pumping water with the latest European pumps from three wells, and irrigating the desert round El-Azrek. Water is the most important thing in Arabia. I won't bother you with details, but in a year from then I had Hamûd more or less settled in a palace with all the modern conveniences coming in, and sanitary arrangements the like of which had never been known in the East.

He paid me very well for the trouble I was taking, and I began to get an insight into business. I saw that the bulk of the money goes to the middleman, and that another large slice of it goes to the man who works the transport. I was the middleman, very much the middleman, and as my money came in I put it, or most of it, into camels. Everything that I couldn't carry in the bus had to come two hundred and fifty miles from El-Akabah across the desert, and only camels could bring it. About two years ago I added a small steamer, called the *Castle Bromwich*, to my camels, to collar the Mediterranean freights.

Hamûd never slacked; he kept feeling more and more civilized and went on growing more and more European every month. I saw that he had the illustrated English weeklies and magazines, and everything he saw in them he bought. I made it my business to see that he got the best of everything, and naturally he had to pay the best prices. The grand piano was not a success, though it was over a month coming from El-Akabah, because there was no one to play it. Also the motor-car proved of very little use, because there were no roads to drive it on. But they were certainly the best of their kind, and the mere possession of them gave him immense satisfaction, so that he certainly had his money's worth.

His great ambition, to go to England, he could not gratify, because if he left the country for as long as ten days one of his many brothers would have started a revolution and made himself Sherif.

THE businesses I went into! Furniture, carpets, clothes, wines, grocery, and all kinds of luxuries. Once, I remember, he took a fancy to plus-fours, and he decided to dress the regular army, about a thousand men, in them. I had to go into the clothing business and make a journey to Vienna to make sure that the plus-fours were of the best cloth and of the genuine Savile Row cut. There is a very good profit on a thousand plus-fours at eighteen guineas apiece when you get them made in Vienna and transport them to El-Azrek yourself.

I'm bound to say that the army looked a very much smarter body of men in their plus-four uniform than in their old Bedouin robes. But it was a bit hard not to laugh when I saw them on parade, because underneath their plus-fours they wore those white nightgown things they wear under their robes, and they wore no stockings. But they were very pleased and Hamûd was very pleased, and all the young bloods of the desert had to have plus-fours too, and I had to import and transport them. I made about twelve thousand pounds out of plus-fours. And Hamûd was so bucked that he cut off his hair, which he had always worn in Bedouin fashion in two long plaits round his neck, and parted it at the side, and I had to import the most expensive brilliantine to plaster it down with.

At first only Hamûd and his entourage lived at El-Azrek; but when we built the most superior sûk—it's a cross between a bazaar and a market-place—in Arabia Deserta, and the irrigation made the desert bloom all round it, living there became more and more fashionable, and I went into the building trade. There's a lot of money in the building trade when labour's cheap, and I had no difficulty in hiring all the Soudanese and Nubians I wanted from their masters. We discouraged Armenians. It was certainly the only town in Arabia Deserta with fairly decent sanitation.

The palace kept growing larger and larger, for there had to be more and more rooms to keep imports in. A couple of years

ago I built a strong-room in it, to keep a fair stock of boxes of sovereigns handy. Most of them were buried in different parts of the desert, and only Hamûd knew their whereabouts. Its door was fitted with a Yale lock, and I only gave Hamûd one of the keys to it, in case of emergency. I had a feeling that some day there would be an emergency and I might have to leave quickly. That was why I did not hamper myself with many belongings, and why my Soudanese camel-drivers were so nippy with their machine-guns that my caravans, bringing imports from El-Akabah, were never attacked after the first two years.

I had this feeling that there would be an emergency some day because quite a large number of the Bedouins, the bulk of the older men indeed, including many important sheiks, disliked civilization very much. They're a conservative lot, the Bedouins; they've only given up bows and arrows for about two hundred years. But except for that, everything in the garden was perfectly wonderful.

I saw that Hamûd had the illustrated English weeklies and magazines, and everything he saw in them he bought.

He paused to slip off the divan and mix whiskies-and-sodas; and we lit two more Coronas.

Then he settled down on the divan again and with a sudden gloominess said: "Did you ever read a book called 'The Sheik'?"

"No; I never read a book called 'The Sheik,'" said I.

Well, it was that confounded book that brought Miss Effie Robinson to Arabia in search of Romance. To Arabia! Think of it! Arabia Deserta and Romance! It must be a rum book.

She was a tall, thin, dark girl, with a high colour, dull, dark eyes, and a small, tight-lipped mouth and pointed chin, and she looked like a parlour-maid. Also she looked to me as obstinate as a mule—she must have been to get to El-Azrek—and I think she came from the neighbourhood of Tooting Bec and had come into a bit of money. Her father might have been a builder in a small way. But she didn't say much about herself, and when she did say anything on the subject she was given to being mysterious and dropping hints about great ladies—such as that they had a right to their whims. But I was not impressed.

Well, that book had so got at her that she had actually spent a year on learning Arabic before she started out to get a sheik for herself, and she had really learnt quite a bit. She had come to Jiddah and found the sheiks of Arabia Felix not up to sample. Therefore she had dashed into Arabia Deserta and made her way to El-Azrek; and if you think it was easy to make your way to El-Azrek, it wasn't. I had never done anything to make it easy for Europeans, believe me. Monopoly is the soul of business. Her first name may have been Effie, but her second was certainly Tenacity.

Well, she arrived, and Hamûd began by making much of her. To have an English-

woman on tap seemed to him to set the seal of civilization on El-Azrek, and she was given apartments, or at any rate a large bed-sitting-room, in the palace.

Of course she took all she could get. But she had very little use for Hamûd himself. In her eyes he had cut off his romance when he cut off his hair, and a sheik in Austrian plus-fours, with the Savile Row cut, instead of in flowing robes, was no sheik to her. But she did take to Hamûd's brother Mâjid. Of course, most of Hamûd's brothers were all the while looking for a chance of getting in a little revolution and becoming Sherif and taking over his boxes of sovereigns. But Mâjid was the only one I was uneasy about, for he had brains and was very thick with the die-hards. He was too clever to become their leader openly, for Hamûd would have removed him at once if he had; but they rather looked to him to restore the old order when the time came and to see to it that the whole population returned to the simple life in its tents. I certainly had a strong feeling that when the emergency did come, Mâjid would be there or thereabouts.

THERE was something to be said for their point of view, mind you, for in some ways civilization in El-Azrek was not turning out to be all that it is cracked up to be. When I first knew Hamûd's lads, they were a lean lot, first-class fighting men, as hard as nails, who could live and fight for quite a while on a skin of water and a bag of flour. But since Hamûd had gone in for intensive civilization those in El-Azrek had got a bit fat and lazy, especially the army. But the die-hards, sticking to the simple life and their camel's-hair tents and wearing their long cloaks and spurning plus-fours, stayed as tough as ever they had been.

Well, Effie Robinson made a dead-set at Mâjid, and he certainly looked the romantic sheik, for, besides wearing the costume, he was a good-looking beggar. At first it seemed to make him uncomfortable; but presently he seemed to be getting to like it. She swooped on him and made dashes at him, and when he was about took no notice of anyone else. She was quite romantic about it: I've seen her clutch his elbow with both hands and murmur: "My sheik! My sheik!" Of course, it was quite respectable; she was out to marry him and become his only legal wife and out the others, and I expect she intended to take him to Tooting Bec some day and score off her friends. But I was rather surprised when he took to encouraging her; but he may have done it to please Hamûd, or perhaps he thought he could learn something from her that might come in useful for his revolution. He was an astute lad. At any rate, they became as thick as thieves, and it came to my ears that she was telling him that he ought to be the Sherif because he had remained a real sheik while Hamûd had gone European.

It was she who started the business of the Merry-Go-Round. In the evening we used to gather in the court of the palace and drink coffee and smoke and talk and swop yarns, Hamûd and some of his brothers and notables and a sheik or two who had come in from the desert; and it was then that Effie Robinson put in most of the good work with Mâjid. It was often very good talk, and the court was a pleasant place to talk in, for early in building the palace I had transplanted some young palms into it, and being well watered they had grown into fine green trees not at all like the local product before I started irrigating. Hamûd never tired of hearing about the wonders of civilization, and one evening the talk fell on fairs, and Effie Robinson told him about Merry-Go-Rounds and said that he ought to get himself one. Of course, he did not tumble to it that she was sneering at him, and he took to the idea as if it was the idea of a lifetime and begged me to get him one and get it quick.

I always humoured Hamûd in the matter of imports when I wanted a change; so next morning Birket took me and a couple of boxes of sovereigns in a bus to Port Said. Of course, the best Merry-Go-Rounds are made in the States, where they call them Calliopes, because they have the biggest circuses there. But I cabled from Port Said to Vienna and learnt that they make very good ones in Berlin. I instructed the captain of the *Castle Bromwich* to go to Trieste and wait there for a cargo, and went myself to Trieste on a more comfortable steamer, and from Trieste to Berlin. There I bought the finest Merry-Go-Round on the Berlin market and had it sent to Trieste in pieces packed for desert travel. What I like about the Germans is that you can rely on them to take pains to pack things for desert travel properly, and be quick about it. I saw it into the hold of the *Castle Bromwich* at Trieste, stayed a few days in Trieste while it was getting to El-Akabah, and joined it there comfortably. Then came the business of getting it to El-Azrek, and it *was* a business. I used all my ninety camels to get it across the two hundred and fifty miles of desert, and it took three weeks.

But when we did get it there I saw that the Merry-Go-Round was going to be a

great event, the greatest event in the memory of man. They were talking about it a good five hundred miles farther on into the desert, on the lines that the unknown is always magnificent, and the simple, unsophisticated, strongly-scented dwellers in the desert were already flocking in to see it.

This was very pleasing to Hamûd, for it swelled his monarchical feeling, and he found that he was going to be the greatest social success of the epoch. But I was not so pleased, for I soon saw that it was giving Mâjid an opportunity. He spent his time colloguing with the desert sheiks, and I had every reason to believe that he was talking to them about newfangled ideas and doings, and the breaking up of the old simple life and the probable effects of the disapproval of Allah on their camels and goats and pasturage.

I chose a mound about a quarter of a mile from the palace with a nice background of desert to set it up on, for I wished everyone to see it distinctly in all its European beauty. It was not an easy business putting the contraption together, though every piece was neatly numbered; but McManus and Birket worked away at it with a dozen hefty Soudanese to help them, and as they fitted it together they kept it covered with the big tarpaulins which were part of the outfit. I wanted it to burst on the eyes of the multitude, full-sized and in all its glory, without any of the bright colours blistered and dulled.

"I've seen her clutch his elbow and murmur: 'My sheik! My sheik!'"

It became the fashion for groups and sometimes a crowd of Bedouins to squat down and watch the work from a distance, and sometimes they were rewarded by the sight of a piebald griffin in orange and purple or a scarlet and yellow hippopotamus. Only Hamûd himself was allowed to potter about among the workmen, and really see the gorgeous animals as they were unpacked. And even in the heat of the day, with the temperature round a hundred and twenty in the little shade there was and the sandstorms blowing in hot spurts across the plain, he would be there, sitting in the seat of the man who works the machine, placidly smoking his narghileh. And Mâjid would often be among the crowd telling the tale to the simple children of the desert, and from their sour looks it wasn't a nice tale he was telling.

I did not like it, and I spoke a word of warning to Hamûd. I found that he hadn't been blind either, for he laughed unpleasantly and said: "Oh, Mâjid, the enemy of Progress. I think I will have him bound on one of the horses early one morning and let my soldiers shoot at him as he comes round. It will be a pleasant sight, for they will be a long time hitting him."

This was the first time I had heard such an inhuman sentiment from Hamûd, though he had talked of sticking his wives on the animals and letting the machine go at full speed until they got giddy and fell off. He was very domesticated. But his excitement about the Merry-Go-Round did not seem to be improving his character.

This kind thought of his about Mâjid did not ease my mind at all. It looked to me quite likely that the emergency I had been expecting might be about due, and I took precautions. Three days before the formal opening of the Merry-Go-Round I sent off seventy of my camels to El-Akabah, and Birket went over the best of the buses very carefully to make sure that it was tuned up to the limit and ready to start. The night before the opening I made sure that my twenty swiftest camels, which were still in their pens, were ready to start at a

moment's notice, and ordered their drivers to have them waiting at the entrance to the palace during the ceremony.

The Bedouins came flocking in and flocking in, a good many of them bringing their wives and children. They choked all the streets in El-Azrek, and the sûk was always packed with a crowd of them. On the opening day there must have been ten thousand of them in and about the town. Hamûd was delighted; in fact, he was in a state of childish glee at being such a social success. Never in the whole history of his tribe had so many of it been gathered together at one time.

He was giving a great feast on the opening day, and I had encouraged the idea. Also I had persuaded him to have it before the opening of the Merry-Go-Round: it would make the crowd more placid. He had two hundred sheep and a hundred goats roasted and distributed. All the morning he walked through the crowd, throwing handfuls of Turkish piastres to the children, who scrambled for them furiously, and being cheery with the sheiks in a lordly way. He was certainly the great man of a great moment, and enjoyed it thoroughly. He wished to have me with him on this great occasion, and I kept by him.

Once he slipped his hand through my arm and said: "Razmous ben Saidi"—that's the nearest he ever got to my name—"in token of the great pleasure you have given me this day, to-night I give you two boxes of the English gold."

Of course I thanked him warmly, and he went on: "I was a Sherif and you have made me a king of kings; you have made my people a nation."

I did not say that I had and I did not say that I had not; I kept my thoughts about his people to myself. I thought I would wait and see.

Well, the time came to set the Merry-Go-Round going, and we moved off to the ground. Of course, Hamûd and his party had reserved seats, or rather, to be exact, a space had been kept clear for it, and all the notables were gathered round him in it, with a large detachment of the army forming three sides of a square, to keep the crowd off.

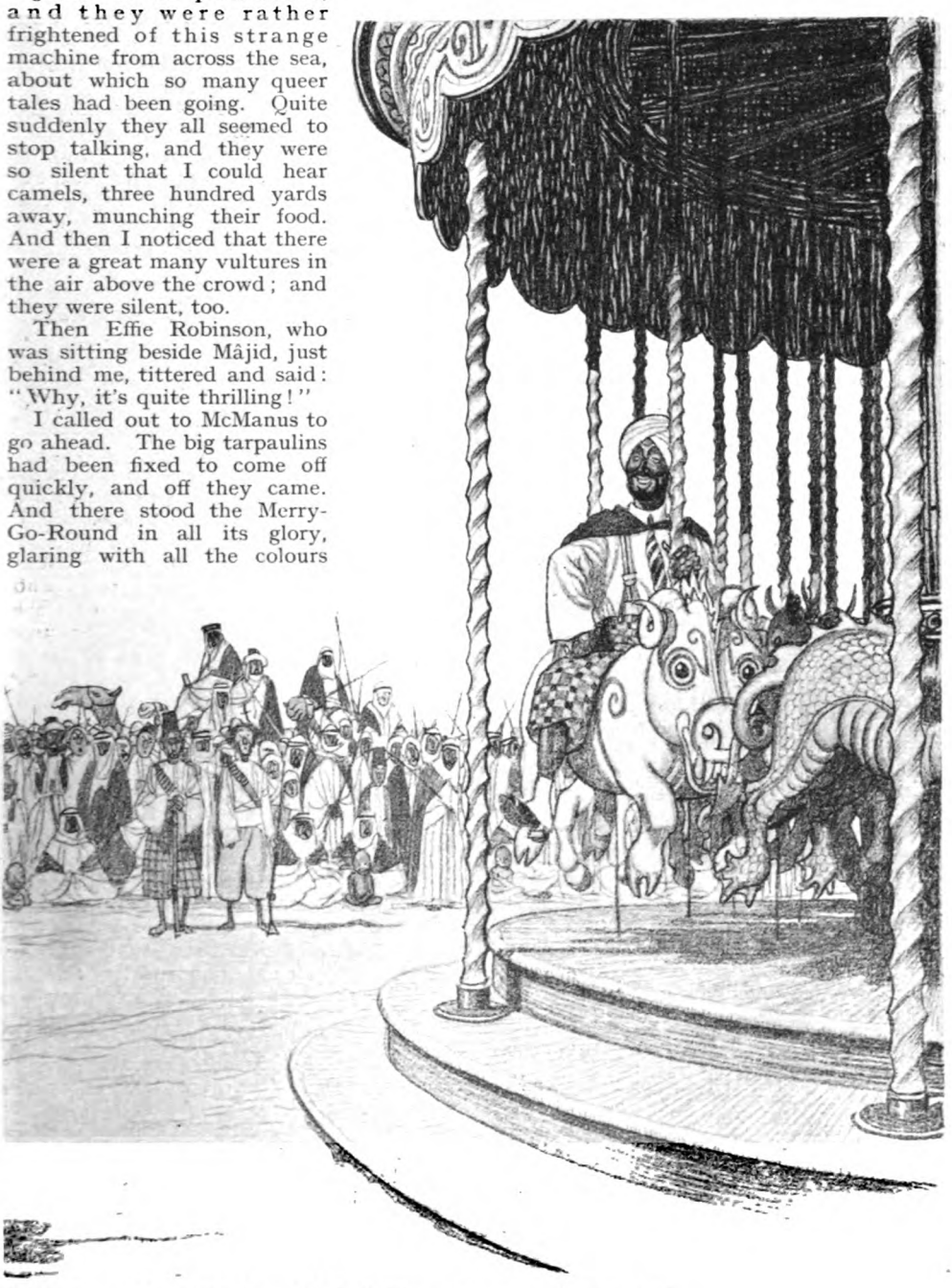
Hamûd was going to christen the machine as it were by taking the first ride on it in

"The Sherif Hamûd rides a pig!" shouted Mâjid.

solitary state. Everything was ready, but just before the unveiling there was a kind of a pause and a hush. I could see that the crowd of Bedouins were a bit scared. None of them had ever seen so many people together in one place before, and they were rather frightened of this strange machine from across the sea, about which so many queer tales had been going. Quite suddenly they all seemed to stop talking, and they were so silent that I could hear camels, three hundred yards away, munching their food. And then I noticed that there were a great many vultures in the air above the crowd; and they were silent, too.

Then Effie Robinson, who was sitting beside Mâjid, just behind me, tittered and said: "Why, it's quite thrilling!"

I called out to McManus to go ahead. The big tarpaulins had been fixed to come off quickly, and off they came. And there stood the Merry-Go-Round in all its glory, glaring with all the colours of the rainbow in the brightest fresh paint. The desert background was the very thing for it. Lord, it did look European! And then its organ started to blare out that stirring tune, "Yes, we have no bananas to-day."



And the confounded thing did look like a pig—a galloping pig!

The crowd clicked ; I give you my word that every man in it gave a click—the most curious sound I ever heard.

Hamûd rose, a fine figure of a man in his plus-fours and a turban and white spats, and walked towards the machine. He had had great difficulty in making up his mind which animal he would ride, and had finally chosen a stumpy kind of dragon with horns, a pretty thing in magenta and blue. He mounted it and McManus set the machine going. Round and round and faster and faster rode Hamûd on his dragon, and it jerked up and down as it went. The crowd was silent, its eyes glued to the revolving Sherif, and I could see that it was enormously impressed. I had been worrying unnecessarily : things were going all right, and Hamûd had strengthened his position.

Then Effie Robinson tittered again and said in Arabic : " Why, the Sherif Hamûd rides a pig—a red and blue pig ! "

For perhaps three seconds I didn't tumble to it ; then a bit of a chill ran down my spine, and I turned sharply and looked at Mâjid. Mâjid had seen the light ! Poor Hamûd was done !

Mâjid was already on his feet, and before I could plug him on the jaw and shut his mouth, he had shouted : " The Sherif Hamûd rides a pig ! "

And the confounded thing did look like a pig—a galloping pig !

The Merry-Go-Round was making such a row that I don't suppose that more than a hundred Bedouins heard him ; but at least a dozen of them, parrot-like, repeated his words : " The Sherif Hamûd rides a pig ! "

I said sharply to Birket : " Come, and come quick ! " and we went quickly while there was any going to be got.

THEY say that bad news travels fast. This did. It couldn't have been more than a minute and a half before ten thousand Bedouins were on their feet and yelling : " The Sherif Hamûd rides a pig ! " And as they yelled they pressed in towards the Merry-Go-Round to get at him and show him what they thought of the abomination.

Birket and I came out of the back of the crowd and sprinted for a hundred yards or so before we turned. There was no hurry : nobody was taking any notice at all of us. The whole yelling crowd was pressing in towards the Merry-Go-Round, raging to get at Hamûd. Then, above the yelling, there suddenly came dreadful screaming, and the centre of the crowd nearest the Merry-Go-Round began to boil. For a good minute I didn't tumble to what was happening, then I saw that the pressure of the crowd was driving the inmost ranks up against the revolving animals, and they were struggling furiously to push away from them, but the pressure was too great, and as they struggled they screamed. Those heavy animals, with only one man riding, were going round at a tremendous speed with a devil of a momentum, and when they hit a man they smashed him. It was a horrible death, and the poor devils saw it coming.

Their screaming, the most gruesome sound I ever heard, grew louder and louder, but Birket and I didn't wait for the moment when the pressure of the crowd should stop the machine. We saw that we should get all the blame for the catastrophe. We bolted to the camels and the palace as hard as we could lick.

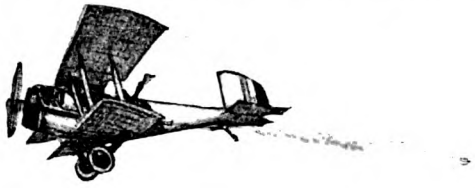
It would be some little time before the crowd thought about us, but we wished to leave El-Azrek before it did.

I had one of the keys of the Yale lock of the strong-room on me, and I went straight to it to get my two boxes of sovereigns. On the way it occurred to me that something in the nature of an indemnity ought to be coming to me for the waste of all my energy. Now that poor old Hamûd was dead, for he had certainly been shot or bludgeoned by the first of the crowd to get at him, El-Azrek would fall to ruin again ; the pumps would be smashed, the desert would recover its own. The only vengeance I could take on Mâjid for poor Hamûd's murder, for murder it was, was to relieve him of all of his ill-gotten gains I could, and I took another eight boxes. Two we took with us in the bus ; the other eight we loaded on to camels, and I sent them off to a small oasis fifty miles due north in case Mâjid should take it into his head to send after them and catch them on the way to El-Akabah.

While we were getting ready to start, the yelling round the Merry-Go-Round ceased : so we knew that the dead bodies had stopped it. But for some time its organ went on blaring : " I wonder where my baby is tonight." When the bus rose in the air we saw the crowd. It was mostly swirling gently round the mound, but a column was already moving towards El-Azrek. Probably Mâjid and his friends were at the head of it. About a thousand Bedouins fired at us as we rose, but we didn't hear the whine of a single bullet.

We reached El-Akabah at half-past three, and Birket filled up the tanks again and pushed off to pick up the camels on their way to the oasis and bring in three of the eight boxes they were carrying. By sunset the following evening he had brought in the other five and all ten of them were safely stowed away on the *Castle Bromwich*.

The next day news came from El-Azrek.



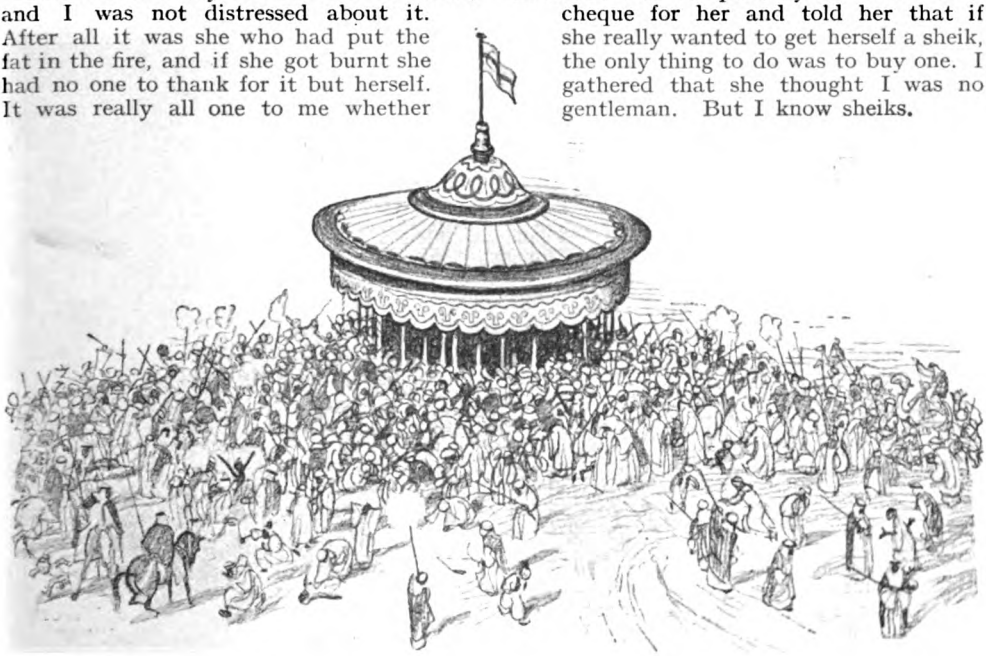
It was a bit exaggerated : the story was that the Merry-Go-Round had suddenly come to life and marched about the plain destroying the Bedouins in thousands. In the course of the next few days it toned down a good deal, but it seemed certain that it had killed or maimed three or four hundred of them. Poor old Hamûd had been killed, and Mâjid had made himself Sherif. Unlike Hamûd, he had killed off all his brothers in the old but most uncivilized desert fashion, in order to prevent revolutions. There was no news of Effie Robinson.

There was nothing to be done but settle things up and go. El-Azrek was done for ; the little civilization I was building up had been busted. Word went up and down the coast that there were good camels for sale, but only for English sovereigns. It was surprising what a lot of English sovereigns turned up. I sold seventy camels for four thousand seven hundred. I gave my own twenty Soudanese their freedom and a camel apiece, and pleased they were.

I had not had any news of Effie Robinson, and I was not distressed about it. After all it was she who had put the fat in the fire, and if she got burnt she had no one to thank for it but herself. It was really all one to me whether Mâjid had stuck her in his harem or someone else had wrung her neck. Her spitefulness, or her imbecility, had done in poor old Hamûd and it had spoilt six years' hard work of mine, and just when I had really got into my business swing.

But two days before the *Castle Bromwich* sailed for Port Said she turned up, on a camel and with an escort, not much the worse for the journey, but furious. Mâjid had not only made it quite clear to her that she was not going to share his throne, but he had sent her away from El-Azrek without any signs of sorrow at her going. She was strongly of the opinion that he was no gentleman, and certainly not a genuine sheik.

I offered her a passage on the *Castle Bromwich* to Port Said, but I found that she was not by any means cured of sheiks, and she arranged with the captain of a schooner in the harbour to take her to Hodeida, and from there she was taking the caravan route into the real desert, where, she said, the people were too far from civilization to be spoilt by it. I cashed a cheque for her and told her that if she really wanted to get herself a sheik, the only thing to do was to buy one. I gathered that she thought I was no gentleman. But I know sheiks.



When the bus rose in the air about a thousand Bedouins fired.

PUZZLES IN PAINT

INDICTMENT by ARTHUR LAWRENCE | DEFENCE by P. G. KONODY

In connection with the pictures and sculpture reproduced in these pages, the reader is asked to assume that the "parties" responsible for them have been brought to the bar of Public Opinion. The Prosecution contends that such works as these are apt to disturb the mental poise of the community, and the case is heard before Mr. Justice Standback and a Special Jury. The Indictment has been entrusted to Mr. Lawrence, who, in the course of his visits to a large number of art exhibitions, has had many freakish works of art photographed for reproduction, and from his collection the accompanying examples have been selected; while Mr. Konody, the well-known Art Critic, who has acted in that capacity for many years, on behalf of "The Observer" and "The Daily Mail," undertakes the Defence.

ARTHUR LAWRENCE, for the Prosecution.

MR. LAWRENCE: M'Lord. Supported by the exhibits which have been put in as evidence, our contention is that a form of art has arisen which, consisting, as it so largely does, of gross distortions and geometrical puzzles, is likely to be subversive of the mental and even the physical welfare of the community.

These proceedings have been instituted under an Act of King Canute (of blessed memory) wherein (Cap. 77: Sec. 0301) it is enacted that "Any artificer who casts sand into the eyes of H.M. the King or of his loyal subjects or causes the said King or his subjects to contract rheumatic chills, by reason of puzzles in paint or distortions in stone, or shall perpetrate any other barbaric artifice of a like nature, shall forthwith be led to the place where such work was executed, that he may be executed himself, after which the alleged work of art shall be placed over his remains, as an adequate memorial of his achievements."

Within the precincts of the court, gentlemen, is the photographer who, on several occasions, accompanied me to art exhibitions, in order to obtain photographs of works which seemed likely to cause obliquity of vision to the spectators or general disaffection among the subjects of the Crown. At the time of his engagement he was a healthy young fellow, care-free and in the full enjoyment of life; whereas now, as the result of his experience, he has contracted a squint and he has become, as the phrase has it, afraid of his own shadow. Can you wonder at his condition, now that you have had the doubtful privilege of inspecting the objects which have been brought into court? You have had the advantage of seeing them under the semblance of black and white, whereas he has been confronted by the colour schemes devised by these artists. He frequently desired that someone would place the picture the right way up when, according to my information, it was already in that position. It was not long before his moral stamina seemed to desert him and neurotic symptoms set in, until the time came when he walked as one "Who feared to turn his head, Because he knew some 'Work of Art' Did close behind him tread."

At the first exhibition which we attended together I desired him to photograph No. 1

in our list of exhibits, " The Fig." After he had adjusted the trembling legs of his tripod, I approached the Art Expert who was in charge of the exhibition.

" This picture," I said to him, " is catalogued as ' The Figure.' I can find nothing human in this conglomeration of angles. Has it to do with arithmetic—the product of three times seven—or something of that sort ? "

" No," said the Expert, who seemed ill at ease ; " the title given it in the catalogue is a mistake. It should be ' The Fig.' "

" Fig ! " I exclaimed. " And where is the Fig ? "

My informant pointed to a dark blob in the bottom right-hand corner of the canvas.

" That," he said, " is the Fig."

After a pause for recovery, I ejaculated, " But that's only a small bit of the puzzle. What about all the rest of the thing ? "

" It's a large canvas, don't you think," he replied, " and to look it over again would make me feel faint. Shall we—— ? "

But I thought not. Well, not at the moment. In dealing with the inexplicable, one has to be careful.

The next exhibit, however, entitled " The Concert " (No. 2), seems to be a bit of propaganda for Prohibition ; as, however, the work represents the impression left upon the mind of a lady, I withdraw all implications. Yet, for myself, I feel confident that if I attended a concert and saw everything on the wobbly and misty side, with an antelope, or some such animal, trying to get through the ceiling, I shouldn't worry much about Modern Art. I should go home.

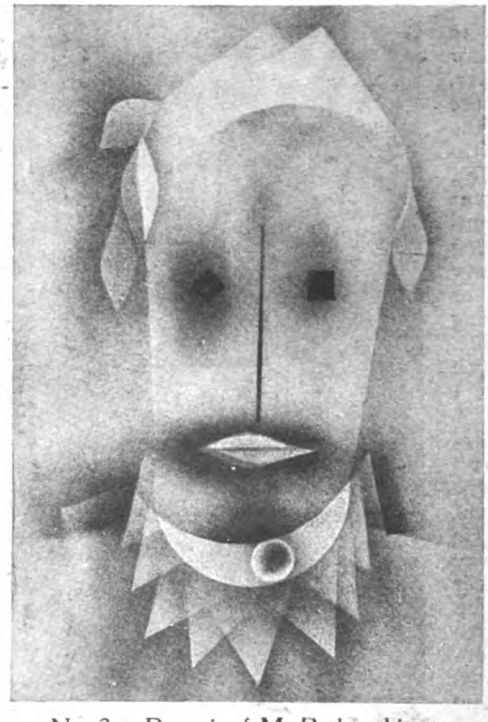
It was while photographing " The Concert " that the man with the camera nearly brought about a catastrophe. He had to stand well away from the picture in order to focus it. Behind him was an exceptionally large canvas, with a fleshy subject, which he regarded as a shameful affair. The light of the morning had sufficed him up to that moment, but now—without a word of warning—there came a lightning flash and an explosion, a shriek from two lady visitors not far away, and the smell of battle which the flashlight apparatus leaves in the air. His grunt of disappointment as he looked over his shoulder gave him away. Another inch or two and the huge canvas behind him would not have been worth the two hundred pounds at which it was priced. In fact, it would only have been fit for the dustbin. After I had relieved myself of a few well-chosen words, he undertook not to put his hand to this destructive business again. It must be a strange art, gentlemen, which can drive an honest man to thoughts of crime.

The " portrait " of M. Perlenschiven (No. 3) may be quite a *chic* affair, with its dog-collar and paper cap. The unmatched eyes give some relief to the long vista of face. It seems odd, however, that a palette and brush should have been brought into

No. 1.—The Fig.
By André Masson.

No. 2.—The Concert.
By Alice Bailly.

action, for this sort of thing is usually done with a pair of scissors and paper and plenty of gum. It may be, however, that it is the logical outcome of a combination of 'isms—Cubism, Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism, and the rest, yet one is a bit surprised that any man can have the crust to pack it up and send it over the water to one of our exhibitions. The same remarks apply, more or less, to the companion picture, by the same artist, of "A Young Girl" (No. 4). The inference here is that one of the maxims of Modern Art must be: "Take your money in advance and then be as rude as you like to the sitter." You may get a laugh somewhere, and she is not likely to raise a lot of personal matters by invoking the Law.



No. 3.—Portrait of M. Perlenschiven.
By Paul Klee.

The reinforced-concrete composition which Mlle. Suzanne (not the lawn-tennis player) has entitled "Le Lac" (No. 5) may be anything with two figures in it, and, therefore, suggests many titles. It might be described as "After the Battle for the Bath." This is supported by the simulated grief of the defeated lady on the left, while her athletic companion is triumphantly removing her skin-tight garments and padded supports. It is more likely, however, that it is intended to represent two women vainly endeavouring to boil a kettle on an old kitchen range, which is not giving out any heat except where it is least expected, for while the kettle refuses to boil the weeping girl on the left has evidently found a hot spot with her fingers. This is probably the best solution of this particular puzzle, as the soot given forth by the obsolete range would explain the general atmosphere of the picture and the "old iron" look of the figures. Of course, they might be the sole survivors of some luckless ship and are now afloat in a patent steel boat, while the lady, looking ahead, is exclaiming: "We are the first That ever burst Into this silent sea." And there we will leave them.

And now let us touch lightly upon Exhibit No. 6, which suggests a firework display at the Crystal Palace. Yet it is not so, for, by the gun in the corner and the aid of a label, we find it is "A Fantasia on War." However, 'tis a cheery thing and might serve as a chair-back or table-centre.

No such kind words can be used of "The Constructor" (No. 7), where an infuriated roll of linoleum is falling upon the figure of an animate dummy. Apart from this suggestion of movement, this

is the sort of thing we were compelled to do in our infancy, after being promoted from "freehand" to "shading." It is remarkable what some artists will invite the public to regard as serious contributions to art.

Much the same contempt for the observer is shown in "The Marchers" (No. 8), a water-colour which does, perhaps, suggest the movement of nether limbs and the angle at which rifles are carried; but is it worth while? What can we learn from it and what sort of skill is required in such a production?

Finally, we have a photograph of a sculpture (No. 9) by Lawrence Atkinson, about whom a whole book has been written to show that he is the apostle of "non-representational art." His sculpture represents nothing and is, therefore, termed an "abstraction." If that is so, why is this maltreated stone entitled "L'Oiseau"? That is definite enough, and entitles us to look for its presentment. There is now quite a vast library of muddled thinking on Art, and just as those who dope themselves desire others to imitate their example, so these professors are quite hurt if we decline to share their confusion. The only mental exertion required for this sort of sculpture comes in when you have finished messing about with the stone and have to decide what you will call it. I am reminded of another sculptor, Brancusi, who made no small stir in this city. He had shaped a piece of marble to resemble an egg and then affixed a label to it, "The Nude." Well, the marble was naked enough, but what a gratuitous piece of impertinence! Yet, as there are always some half-witted folk in every community, there were not lacking visitors to that exhibition who, on seeing this massive ovoid, caressed it with their clammy hands, purring like cats and exclaiming, "Isn't it wonderful!"

M'Lord, it may be that there are pictures which ought not to be hung and artists who ought to be hanged, but we do not press for this penalty.

No. 4.
A Young Girl.
By Paul Klee.

No. 5.
Le Lac.
By Suzanne Roger.

P. G. KONODY, for the Defence.

MR. KONODY: I am rather surprised that your lordship has decided that there is a case to go to the jury, and hardly less so to find that I am asked once again to defend and explain the work of modern artists, for I thought that everybody now liked our modern artists' work and understood it. I thought this, because Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Expressionism, and all the other 'isms, which are merely names for different varieties of modern art, had now been before the public so long that everyone was used to them.

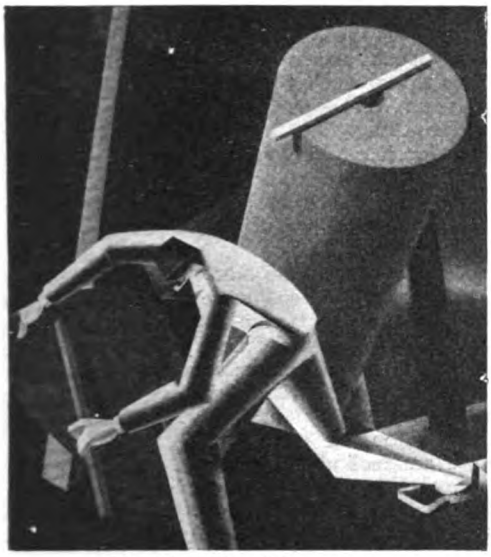
Appreciation of art, after all, is merely a matter of getting used to it. Art critics and people who make a special habit of looking at pictures can appreciate and enjoy a new kind of picture when it first appears, just as musical critics and those whose ear is specially trained to music can appreciate a new composition at the first hearing; but the ordinary man whose time is occupied in other ways, and whose mind is full of other thoughts, cannot observe anything in a new form of art, except its strangeness. Wagner's music, as everyone knows, was considered a mere blare of formless noise by the contemporary public. To-day, though it may be an exaggeration to say that the Siegfried Idyll is whistled by the butcher boy, it is certainly true that this tune and dozens of others from Wagner's operas are perfectly familiar to thousands—if not millions—of everyday mortals and are thoroughly enjoyed by them.

No. 6.—A Fantasia on War.
By F. Depero.

The reception given to the Impressionists' and Post-Impressionists' pictures on their first appearance was just as hostile as the reception given to Wagner's music; and though we are apt to forget it to-day, the Pre-Raphaelites' pictures, when they first appeared, were hailed with storms of abuse in exactly the same language as is now used by the enemies of the modern painters.

"Christ in the Carpenter's Shop," by Millais, now one of the most admired and valuable pictures in the Tate Gallery, when it was first exhibited was described in the following language:—

> "You come—in the Royal Academy Exhibition . . . to the contemplation of a Holy Family. You will have the goodness to discharge from your minds all Post-Raphael ideas, all religious aspirations,



No. 7.—The Constructor.
By Ivo Pannaggi.

all elevating thoughts; all tender, awful, sorrowful, ennobling, sacred, graceful, or beautiful associations; and prepare yourselves, as befits such a subject—Pre-Raphaelly considered—for the lowest depths of what is mean, odious, repulsive, and revolting.

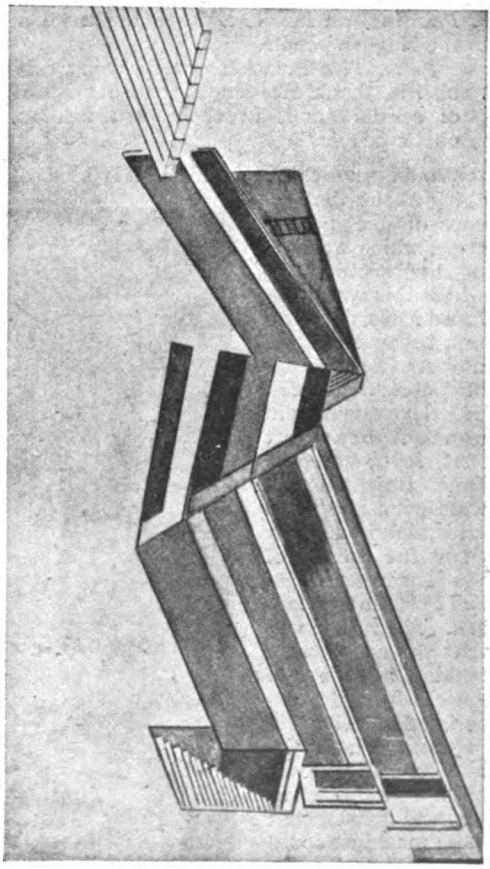
"You behold the interior of a carpenter's shop. In the foreground . . . is a hideous, wry-necked, blubbering, red-headed boy, in a bed-gown, who appears to have received a poke in the hand from the stick of another boy with whom he has been playing in an adjacent gutter, and to be holding it up for the contemplation of a kneeling woman so horrible in her ugliness that (supposing it were possible for any human creature to exist for a moment with that dislocated throat) she would stand out from the rest of the company as a Monster in the vilest cabaret in France or the lowest gin-shop in England. . . . Whenever it is possible to express ugliness of feature, limb, or attitude, you have it expressed. Such men as the carpenters might be undressed in any hospital where dirty drunkards in a high state of varicose veins are received.

". . . This, in the nineteenth century, and in the eighty-second year of the annual exhibition of the National Academy of Art, is what Pre-Raphaelite Art can do to render reverence and homage to the faith in which we live and die! . . .

". . . We should be certain of the Plague, among many other advantages, if this Brotherhood were properly encouraged."

The author was Charles Dickens—not an ill-natured man nor a fool, but, just as far as pictures were concerned, a member of the public who could not see anything in a new kind of picture except its strangeness.

Now, if the jury will look at an exhibit put in for the defence, a picture of cypress trees by Van Gogh (No. 10), they will see nothing strange in it. It seems to you gentlemen quite an ordinary picture of cypress trees, rather like cypress trees you have seen in posters. But, mark well, your lack of astonishment and resentment of this picture is simply due to the fact that you have seen it and others like it, and posters imitating it, a good many times in a good many places, in the last thirty years. For this picture by Van Gogh, like all Van Gogh's pictures, was thought a monstrous impertinence and a howling eccentricity forty years ago. During the whole of his lifetime Van Gogh did not, I believe, sell a single picture for more than



No. 8.—The Marchers.
By Lawrence Atkinson.
(Reproduced from "The New Art," by Horace Shipp, by permission of the publisher, Cecil Palmer.)

about twenty pounds, and when, in 1911, his works were first introduced to the English public at the first Post-Impressionist exhibition, they were described as follows :—

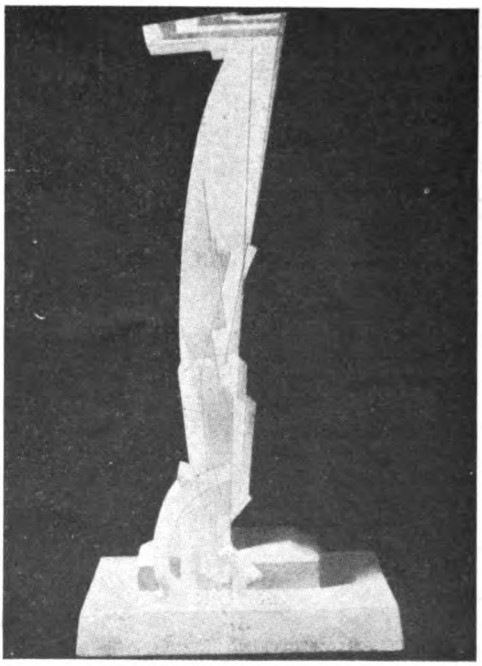
"(The works) showed intellectual, emotional, and technical degeneracy; wilful anarchy and notoriety-hunting, which, if it were not transparent, might be compared with criminality. . . . For a moment there came even a fierce feeling of terror lest the youth of England, young promising fellows, might be contaminated here. . . .

"It would be nauseating to myself and your readers to dwell on details. It would be almost as unpleasant to read as to see. There is no fear for permanent mischief, I hope. The thing is too bad for that. There is no regeneration for deluded egoists. They are morally lost in the Inferno where Dante places the unfaithful to God. . . .

"I hope the press will teem with resentment against the insults offered to the noble arts of Design, Sculpture, and Painting, an insult, also, to the taste of the English people.

". . . This invasion of depressing rubbish is, thank Heaven, new to our island of sensible and, in their own fashion, poetic people."

Would you think or write this kind of thing about the picture of the cypress trees, which was one of the pictures to which this writer alluded? No, of course not, because you are now used to that way of dealing with trees. The developments in contemporary art that followed the Post-Impressionists were even harder to understand at first than the works of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists. The reason was that the artists were making a series of extremely able experiments. They recognized that the camera had thrown down a kind of challenge to artists, that these machines could do better and more quickly certain things than any human could possibly do; and the artists asked themselves—or perhaps I should say the more intelligent artists asked themselves—"Is this thing which the camera and the cinema can do what we mean by art? Is it the same thing that has produced the great masterpieces of painting and sculpture which we value in the world?" They answered that question, as they say in Parliament, in the negative. And is there anyone who would give an affirmative reply?



No. 9.—L'Oiseau.
By Lawrence Atkinson.
(Reproduced from "The New Art," by Horace Shipp, by permission of the publisher, Cecil Palmer.)

But if once it be admitted that the arts of painting and sculpture do not consist in creating photographic illusion, but in conveying to a spectator the artist's impressions, sensations, and knowledge of the world around, where is the point beyond which the artist cannot go in individuality and personal expression?

I am inclined to think that the range of the artist's activity as regards self-expression has no necessary limits, that anything is material for the artist's vision, that everything is grist to his mill, that the only aspect of his work that matters is the communication between his spirit and the spirit of the spectator.

It is just here, of course, that the real difficulty comes in. The artist has to communicate what he has to say in some intelligible language. It is up to the man who looks at his picture to learn that language if he does not already know it; but it is also up to the artist to play fair and take the trouble to use a language, or invent one, and not attempt to communicate in purely casual signs.

The language of communication used by modern artists is, as it were, a species of hieroglyphics. When we are accustomed to their pictures we understand these hieroglyphics, which are, with all the best of them, part of the recognized language which, working more or less together, all these artists have worked out. By means of the geometrical and other formulæ which they have investigated, they have now enlarged the vocabulary

of art. There are some, it must be admitted, who use hieroglyphics that are not properly thought out and not properly co-ordinated; but these are not the great men among the moderns—they are the minor artists who have lost their way.

In the exhibits there are examples of those who have lost their way. Cubism may be regarded as dead, and I can find no particular justification for "The Fig" (No. 1). But "The Concert" (No. 2) is surely quite a pleasant example of a non-photographic picture, giving the effect as left on the mind of the artist as opposed to what some may regard as the precise facts. Let us assume that the quadruped is a gazelle. If the concert party is playing a rustic piece, the image of this light-footed animal may have predominated in the mind of the artist and, becoming part of her impression, is included with the rest of the objects which came to her mind. So with "A Fantasia on War" (No. 6), all the war scenes could not have been of a gloomy character, so far as sight is concerned, and the shooting of rockets, the soaring of shells, and the like may have had their bright moment for the mind of the observer.

No. 10.—Cypresses. By Van Gogh.
Forty years ago this picture was looked upon as "A Puzzle in Paint."

The two portraits by Mr. Klee of the man and the girl (3 and 4) need not be taken *au grand sérieux*. The greatest of *littérateurs* is allowed to have his light moments and indulge in a *jeu d'esprit*. Why not the artist? There is no reason why all humour should be driven out of the studios. "Le Lac" (No. 5) is in the nature of a decorative design. Look at the carvings in churches, old houses, at decorative plaques of historic events, and you will find much the same sort of thing. I do not say that this is a first-class example, but there is no reason whatever why this form of decorative art should not exist. It has done so for a good many centuries. "The Constructor" (No. 7) is to be admired for the beautiful way in which the artist has established formal relations between the geometrical lines of the machinery and the mechanism of the human body, which, though part of the scheme, is easily recognizable as a human being in swift action.

"The Marchers" (No. 8) and "L'Oiseau" (No. 9) are abstractions presented to the artist's mind of men marching and of bird-life in general, rather than of any bird in particular.

This is not the place to enter into technical details. But, while I defend modern art as it is, it is important for everyone to realize that, speaking generally, modern artists feel that the more severely geometrical formulæ have served their purpose, and that less drastic and more subtle conventionality can be more advantageously employed. No intelligent modern artist attempts to compete with the camera, but the young men show a decided tendency in the design and composition of their pictures to return to the suaver curved and less angular conventions of the great masters. This does not mean that they are more disposed to compromise with naturalism, or to return to the pretty-pretty of Victorian art. It only means that they feel that, at one moment, they went unnecessarily far in the opposite direction.

The picture and the sculpture that you may now find extraordinary you will regard as quite normal as time passes on, and the artists whom you are now inclined to reject you will look back upon in time to come as the great masters of to-day.

"CAPTAIN LONDON CALLING!"

By

BERTRAM ATKEY

Illustrated by
J. DEWAR MILLS

I.

THE loud-speaker, which had been actively erupting sounds of every sort for the past hour, emitted suddenly a saxophone bray so vibrant that Remington awoke, with a little start, from the doze into which a hot bath, a good dinner, and a couple of hours of the vociferous instrument in the corner had sent him after a day's shooting.

He half rose from the too-comfortable chair in order to switch the thing off, but decided that it was too much trouble, and, instead, he turned to the little table at his right hand, poured himself some whisky, and offered up the spirit for the amelioration of the soda siphon.

The siphon hissed, gurgled, and, being exhausted, became sibilantly confused.

"Oh, confound it!" said Remington, and put down the glass. It was so comfortable in the big, warm, empty lounge that he felt lazily unequal to the task of fetching another siphon from the back regions of the house. But he had to do that or go without, for to-night he had allowed the servants to go to a dance down in the village.

"Always the way of it," said Remington to himself. "Eh? You'd think a man who's given the whole evening off to a fat butler for fox-trotting, or whatever it is he does trot, would be spared the trouble of having to fetch himself a siphon. Now, if I were a butler I'm dashed if I wouldn't have the decency to put out a full siphon for my boss before I went off to pick out the prettiest little foxes in the village to trot with."

He laughed, restored to good humour by his modest joke, and sat up, staring absently at the excessively vocal machine, which continued inexorably to transmit the nasal stridencies of the jazz band to the mercies of which Remington (and a few hundred thousand others) had been so kindly "taken over" by a suave broadcasting announcer.

"You utter all sorts, don't you?" said Remington to the loud-speaker. "And you seem to get away with it. Well, I'll forgive you your sins—and they are many—because of your virtues, which are few but good."

Like most lonely men, Jim Remington talked quite a good deal to himself, his furniture, his cigar, or his dogs.

Yet he was not a man who should have been lonely in the big, quiet country house in which he had been born and to which, after certain wanderings, he had returned to associate mainly with memories—and those men of the neighbourhood who shared his sporting tastes.

He had caused wireless to be installed—but his first passion for it had now dwindled to that easy tolerance and sense of companionship which, we are often told, is frequently the end of most great passions.

He was content to let the loud-speaker speak as long as it did not interfere with him—just as he allowed his old setter on the hearthrug harmlessly to jump and twitch and start in her dreams. He had got used to both—and, in any case, the wireless, extended, as it was, to the servants' hall, helped him to keep a good staff in the rather remote corner of the countryside in which he lived.

It was a comfortable house, lacking only a wife to make it as bright as it was comfortable.

Somehow, a wife was one of the things which had never come Remington's way. Which was odd, because, in his big, dark,

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strong-jawed, reserved style, he was a handsome, quiet-mannered, generous, patient, and well-disposed man, though shy, they said—unusually so for a middle-aged bachelor.

Perhaps that had something to do with the lacking wife.

The jazz band wailed and hooted itself to what seemed the silence of sheer exhaustion as Remington sat there, and the ever-suave voice of the announcer benignly bestowed upon listeners the glad news that Mr. Soanso, baritone, would now sing several sea-chanties.

It seemed to Remington that if he went now to fetch his siphon he would suffer no serious loss of entertainment during his absence from the vicinity of the loud-shouter. For he had heard all the sea-chanties so often before.

SO, swinging the empty siphon, he went out of the lounge *en route* to the discovery of that recess or odd corner in which his fat fox-trotting butler might be expected to keep his store of soda-water siphons.

He came, moving quietly in his slippers as most big men who are fit do move, to the dimly-lit and deserted servants' hall.

Caught, as he passed the half-open door, by a remote sound of human speech, he paused, listening.

From the warm gloom of that empty room, lit only by the wavering brightness of a dwindling coal fire, he could hear the faint, far-off voice of Mr. Soanso engaged upon his sea-chanty—and, curiously attracted, Remington stood very still, straining his ears to catch from the hanging and abandoned headphones in the servants' hall the singing which he could have heard much more perfectly from the device of loud utterance in the lounge.

It was no more than the curiosity of a man with nothing at all to do which held him there. He had never heard before the far-off, tenuous sound of one singing through headphones some yards away, and it seemed to him like the thin piping of a ghost whose sole audience is a mouse, busy in the firelight with a crumb.

Remington, straining his ears, could just catch it. He listened for a few seconds; then, with a half-shrug of indifferent but kindly tolerance, he was at the point of moving on to the butler's pantry when somebody stirred very softly in the gloom of the servants' hall.

Remington went rigid, like a setter, listening intently, staring keenly into the gloom.

Silence.

His hand stole quietly round the doorpost, his fingers groping for the switch.

Before he found it Mr. Soanso was baritonily launched on a second sea-chanty:—

I thought I heard our old man say
(Leave her, Johnnie, leave her),
You can go ashore and get your pay
(For it's time for us to leave her).

His fingers on the switch, Remington paused before lighting—for the baritone on the wireless was not the only one singing that chanty.

Somebody had joined in on the last line, very softly.

He listened.

I thought I heard our old man say
(Leave her, Johnnie, leave her),
We'll give them butter and marmalade to-day
(Leave her, Johnnie, leave her).

And now Remington was sure of it. There was a child somewhere in the servants' hall, singing word for word, ever so softly, with that distant voice—singing, crooning, almost in a whisper.

Oh, Tom is gone and I'll go, too
(Leave her, Johnnie, leave her),
Find another ship and another crew
(For it's time for us to leave her).

The song died out.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear, what shall I do? . . . Daddy!"

Remington, strung-up, heard the whisper as plainly as if it had been shouted by the loudest of loud-speakers.

He switched on and walked into the room.

Under a pair of the four sets of headphones, suspended from the hooks which, for convenience, had been screwed into the wooden panel on each side of the fireplace, was kneeling on the floor a small child—a girl of about six.

Her head, a riot of pale gold curls, was within a foot or so of the headphones.

Remington stared down at her, speechless from the sheer unexpectedness of the thing.

The child gazed up at him like a small fascinated creature, speechless, too, probably from shock.

There could never be a greater contrast between two human beings than between these two—the one a tall, towering, dark, sombre-faced man in a dinner jacket, his tie rather carelessly tied, his empty siphon dangling from a brown, sinewy hand; the other a feminine mite, little, pale, shrinking, frightened, kneeling by the fireplace, clothed only in a small, camel-coloured dressing-gown over pyjamas, her bare feet covered only by a pair of minute bedroom slippers—these stained with mud splashes and quite obviously soaked through.

Remington noted that.

She stared up at him with a pair of big, startled blue eyes set in a small face so pale, so delicate and tiny that Remington thought of fairies and elves and things. The daintiest little creature he had ever seen.

He saw, too, that there were tears on her cheeks.

Remington was a man who habitually noticed such minute things.

There was something dreamlike about this discovery. It was much as if, sitting in the lounge, he had closed his eyes for a few seconds, opening them to discover a small fairy sitting on the toe of his slipper.

He realized that he had better say something. It was evident that she would not speak until she had been spoken to.

So he said, "Hello, my dear! Aren't your slippers rather wet?"

The baby smiled.

"Yes. I *think* it was because of the rain."

"Hum! Better take them off, I think, don't you? We'll take them off and get our feet dry."

Obediently, the child slipped off the saturated little things.

Remington put down the siphon and picked them up.

They were the smallest examples of footwear he recollected seeing.

"I expect you couldn't hear the wireless very well, could you?" said Remington, awkwardly, mainly because he could not think of anything else to say.

She smiled again.

"Yes, I could hear. I always could hear daddy," she explained, rather vaguely.

Remington felt that they were not advancing matters much.

"Do you like the wireless very much, my dear?" he asked again.

"Oh, yes—when daddy is calling."

Remington puzzled over that for a moment, then decided that her father must be Mr. Soanso, the baritone.

"Wouldn't you like to hear it through the loud-speaker in the other room much better?" he said.

"Oh, yes, please."

"Very well, then, come along—and we'll dry the shoes and have a drink—of milk—and listen to your daddy—and have a little chat, shall we?"

"Oh, yes, please."

She offered a lovely little paw for Remington to hold, but the big man dropped the wet shoes in his pocket and lifted her up in his arms.

She seemed no heavier than—than—one of the hares he had rolled over that day. And she seemed entirely familiar with her position in a man's arms. Her slim body wriggled once, and apparently without effort adjusted itself in perfect comfort.

But it was novel to Remington, and he was aware of a queer melting tenderness in his heart as he held her.

"Come along, then," he said again, and returned to the lounge.

He put her down on the big woolly rug in front of the fire and felt the tiny bare feet.

They seemed very cold.

So Remington, dimly remembering something about chilblains, hastily dried them with a silk handkerchief and then softly rubbed them warm with his hands.

He left her listening intently to the loud-speaker while he searched for milk.

BY the time he returned the broadcasting station had closed down.

He was glad of that, for he was anxious to find out all about her, and the fewer distractions there were the better.

He took her rather awkwardly on his knee while she gravely drank her milk. It was discovered, accidentally, that by lugging his jacket round a little she could slip one of her feet into his pocket. This was a source of some amusement and pleasure to them both, and did much to break the remaining ice.

Remington, looking a little untidy in his wrung-round jacket, watched her drink her milk for a moment, and was perfectly assured that he had never seen a child so delicately pretty in his life. He would have liked half-a-dozen replicas of her there taking milk with him.

"Was that nice?" he asked.

"Yes, thank you."

"You are a very pretty little girl. And I expect you have a very pretty little name, haven't you?" said Remington.

"Yes; Rosalind. My name is Rosalind Mary London," she explained, with some seriousness and a little pride.

"That is my favourite name," declared Remington. "And I expect you have a nice house. Everybody called Rosalind ought to have a nice house."

Remington was rather surprised at himself. He seemed to be doing well and his awkwardness was diminishing.

"Well, it is a nice house sometimes, but it is so little and not so happy as the other house."

"Oh, dear, that's a pity, Rosalind."

"Yes, it is."

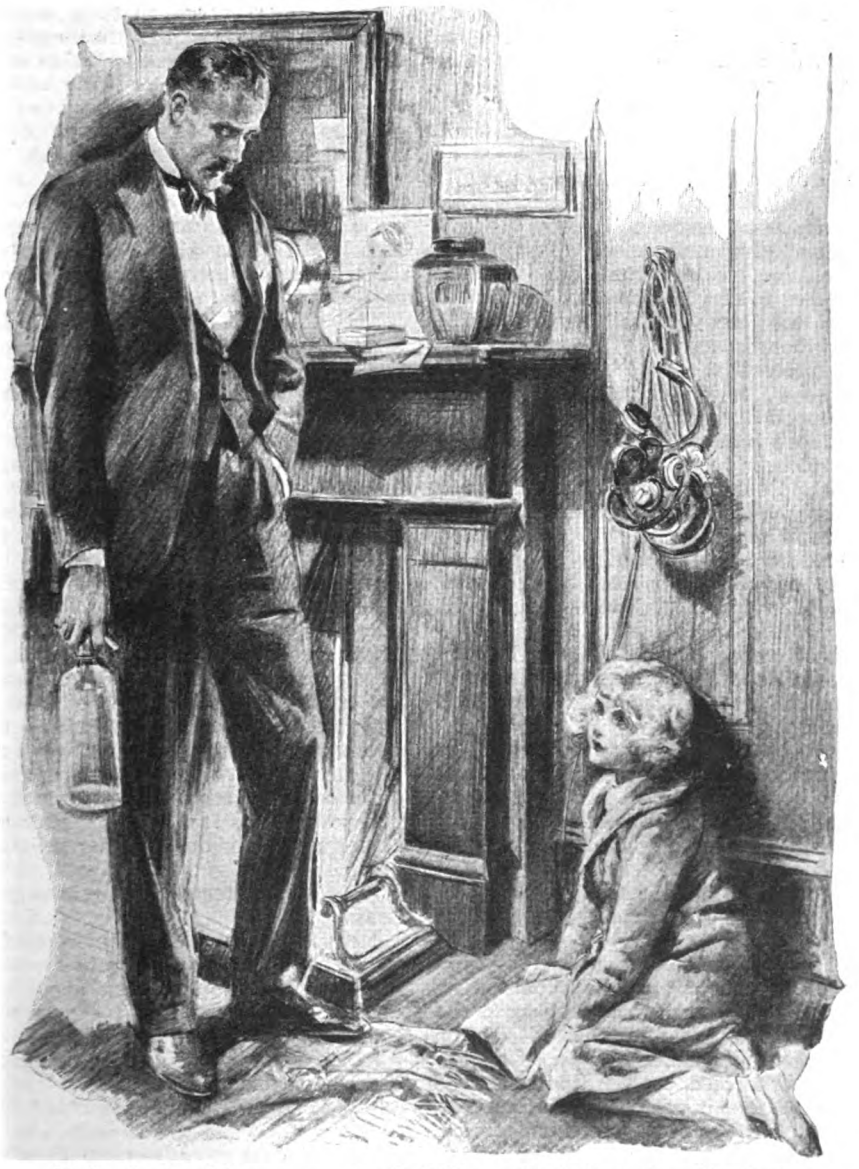
"Where is your house, Rosalind?"

She looked at him curiously.

"Why, it is near yours. We have only been here to live for a little while. It is down the lane and past the wood."

Remington's brows closed in a little.

This must be the child of the pale woman in black, a Mrs. London, who had recently



Under the headphones was a small child—a girl of about six. Remington stared down at her, speechless from the sheer unexpectedness of the thing.

come to live in a tiny cottage, formerly occupied by one of his neighbour's game-keepers. It was some five hundred yards down a rather muddy lane that ran off at right-angles from the road passing Remington's house. He recalled now that he had seen her once or twice. It had only been a quick glimpse from his car—leaving him with a quite slight impression of a tall, pale, slender woman with fair hair that showed rather strikingly above the black clothes she wore. He remembered now that he had not seen her face, for on both occasions she was watching a child busy picking late October blackberries.

Evidently that child had been Rosalind.

But—how came she here alone late on a wet night ?

Her soaked shoes and the splashed little dressing-gown told him that evidently she had slipped out of bed, adventured up the lane, and found her way into the servants'

hall just to hear the radio. No doubt old Andrews, the butler, who always said he was fond of children, had let her listen-in some time or other.

Remington moved uneasily.

It was obvious that her mother could not know where she was. He would have to wrap her up and take her home at once.

"Did you like to hear daddy singing, too?" she asked, suddenly.

"Oh, yes, very much indeed. It was very nice, Rosalind," said Remington.

"He used to sing it to me at home before his ship was lost with all hands, and I know all the words myself. He taught me," she volunteered.

"But——" began Remington, puzzled, then stopped abruptly.

He didn't understand. If this child's father had been recently drowned—his ship lost with all hands—then he could not be singing sea-chanties for the radio to-day. But she said he was.

He held her a little closer.

"But, my dear, was that your daddy singing 'Leave her, Johnnie, leave her,' to-night?"

"Oh, of course it was. It was London calling—I think they ought to say 'Captain' London, like people used to. Why, he is *always* calling!"

Always calling! Something moved in Remington's heart—something that hurt.

"Would you tell me all about it, please, Rosalind?" he asked, rather humbly.

She smiled. He felt her foot wiggle in his pocket.

"Of course I will," she said.

Within five minutes Remington had heard her story.

She had only heard the radio—for brief intervals—twice before, and, as it chanced, on each occasion the announcer had used the signal "London calling" instead of the familiar 2LO. Probably because of a similarity, real or fancied, between the voices she had believed that it was her father (one Captain Harry London, of the merchant service, lost at sea three months before) speaking. Remington gleaned, or guessed, that some of the few items she had heard fitted rather aptly with her childish notion, and now the singing of the chanty had fixed the belief finally and firmly in her mind.

She believed that her daddy, in company with certain other daddies, friends of his in that far place where they were gathered, sang and talked and played music to please and to keep from loneliness the people to whom they could never return.

And she was unshakably convinced that her daddy had sung the chanty to-night for her—just as he had often sung it for her when he was alive

It was in the hope that she would hear him, and, perhaps, the thrilling expectation that he might even speak to her—call her his baby and ask her if she had been a good girl and if her dolly had been a good girl, too—that she had adventured through the drizzle and dark of the muddy lane.

She was growing sleepy when he finished.

"I wish—I wish daddy would talk to me sometimes instead of always singing. But I expect he knows best—and—some day—perhaps when mamma is there with me—he will talk to me——"

The lovely little head drooped close to the white shirt-front, the slim little body relaxed in his arms, the tiny foot in his pocket gave a funny, spasmodic little kick, and Rosalind was asleep.

FOR a few moments Remington sat very still, staring down at her, holding her with the anxious care of those untrained in the old, fond art of holding children.

"Poor little soul," thought Remington, his eyes turning to the loud-speaker, now dumb for a few hours. "Eh, you fraud—what are you going to do about *this?*" he muttered. "Some day you'll half break her heart—you London—who ought to be given your rank and called Captain London—when something you utter will convince her that it isn't her daddy calling—and never was! Lord, what bad luck! She believes it—and it's only a matter of time before somebody destroys her belief. Poor kiddy——"

His arm tightened very gently and protectingly.

He was touched. Much more so than he might have been if two or three of his own like her had been running about his big, lonely house giving him a chance to learn something about children and getting him used to their queer little thoughts and dreams and fancies.

"I wonder if something could be fixed up—some of these radio cracks who understand the dashed cat's-cradle of wires and things could help me fix up something to give her a chance to learn the truth in some way that wouldn't hurt her too much?"

She stirred a little, murmuring in her sleep.

Remington looked down, rapt at sight of the lovely pale flush that sleep was painting daintily on her soft cheeks.

"Eh? Just to give you a chance, baby—to talk to him—to seem to talk to him again and to hear him talk to you—just once more—before—before Captain London goes away for ever and 2LO takes his place. I wonder if——"

Remington broke off as the child murmured again in her sleep—listening breathless and with a touch of pity that was near pain to the low, half-whispered voice.

" . . . Leave her . . . daddy, . . leave her,
Find another ship an' another crew,
For it's time for us to leave her ! "

She was dreaming it all over again.

Then, somewhere from the back of the house, an electric bell began to cry out, long, insistent, continuous—it seemed to Remington, in his present mood, with a touch of panic and appeal.

" That's the mother," he said, carefully put the child down in the cosiest corner of an arm-chair facing the fire, and hurried out.

He found her at the side door, haggard and wide-eyed with sheer panic—a graceful woman, thin, hatless, coatless, terrified—just coherent enough to explain that she had lost her little girl—" hardly more than a baby "—and had come to ask for help in searching the darkness for her.

In the light from the electric lamp in the porch her fair hair gleamed almost as gold as the fluffy curls of Rosalind.

Remington took her hand.

" Don't worry," he said. " The little one is here asleep. She has had an—adventure. I have done my best. I am alone for a few hours, but I gave her some hot milk and—rubbed her feet—and she's warm now and fast asleep. I hope that's all right, Mrs. London—I—you see, I'm not very well up in these things."

He never quite knew whether it was a laugh or a sob that answered him then.

But he heard both a few seconds later when she had the child in her arms again.

" I didn't dream she was anywhere but in bed until I went to bed myself, and when I went in and looked across, expecting to see her as usual—she wasn't there ! And I couldn't find her ! It was dreadful—I thought of her out in the dark and the rain ! "

Remington nodded.

" I know—I can guess. But it's all right. Now, sit down, please, and I'll get the car and run you home."

" No, no—why, it's only a few yards——"

" Oh, yes," insisted Remington. " She's warm now—can't possibly be good to take her out into the night air—I know that much about children, anyway," he claimed, gravely. " She and I are great friends, and I do not like my friends to go from this house on foot on a night like this ! "

She was hugging Rosalind, and her eyes were very bright as they followed him out.

So Rosalind Mary, being a friend of Remington, went home that night in a Rolls saloon that was almost as warm and comfortable as the big chair before the fire in Remington's lounge.

II.

THAT evening's small adventure rounded itself off on the following day, when Remington looked in at the cottage, found that the child was all right after her expedition, and established the beginnings of friendship with her mother. But he found himself worrying oddly about the little one's rather touching belief that the radio was simply a marvellous instrument devised for the purpose of enabling her dead father to talk again with her.

If he had had children of his own he might more easily have dismissed it from his mind as being just another of those childish fancies which would adjust itself in the course of time.

But he was a lonely man, and he had now experienced the tender thrill of pleasure, of pity, of love which every normal man must feel for a child that confidingly nestles to sleep in his arms.

That had been a new thrill, a novel delight, for Remington, and it had awakened something dormant within him—something that would not allow him to forget the disappointment which Rosalind was fated to suffer when, as was inevitable, she learned that it was not her daddy who was " always calling."

She believed it so utterly.

And she was so tiny, so dainty, so fragile and lovely a thing that Remington found it intolerable to contemplate or to conjure up a picture of her when she was in the grip of disillusionment.

He did not know that the sorrows of childhood are said to be evanescent—only April showers momentarily marring an April day—and, because a child like this was more or less a new thing in his life, he would not have believed that any deep sorrow can lay its cold finger upon the spirit of any child without leaving its imprint for ever. Perhaps he was wrong—possibly he was right—in any case, the matter haunted him all that day, and even the thrill of shooting many high and fast cock-pheasants did nothing to free his mind from this new and strange obsession.

" If the kiddie could learn it gradually it would not be so bad ! " he mused. " But she won't. Sooner or later the truth will flash on her like the cut of a whip. She's too little for that—why, it would be like striking a fairy. If anyone could fix up some sort of scheme for it to be gradual—let her daddy speak to her and break it to

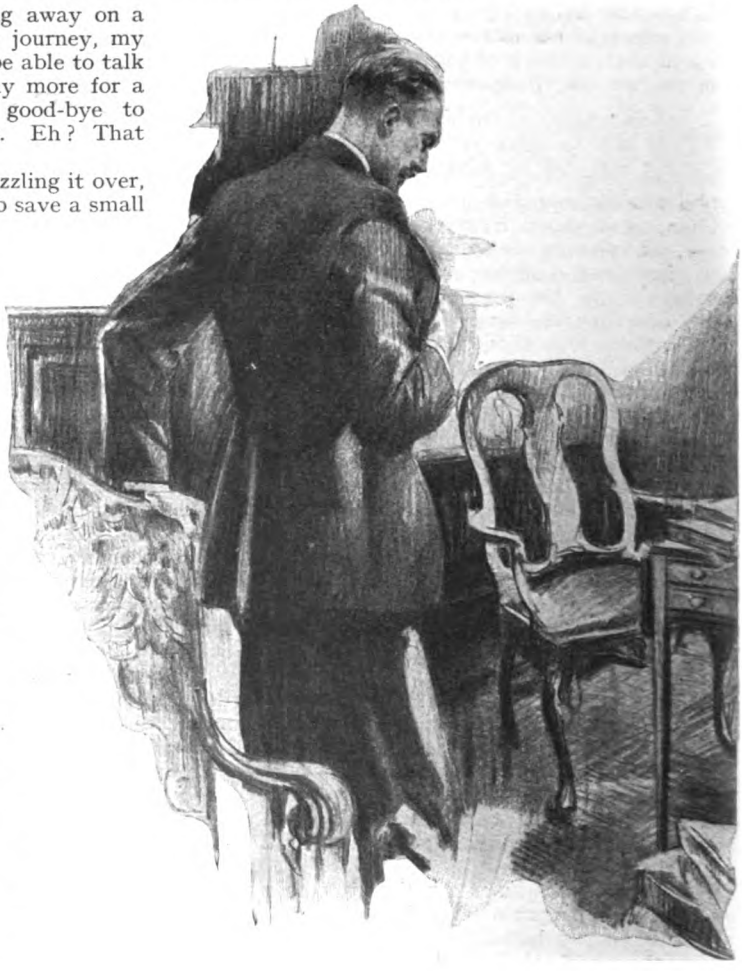
her that he was going away on a long journey—a long journey, my God!—and wouldn't be able to talk—or sing chanties any more for a long time—and say good-bye to her—in a sort of way. Eh? That would solve it."

He sat very still, puzzling it over, this problem of how to save a small kiddie the first of that chain of sorrows which, for all he or anyone could do, she, like everyone else, was destined to endure. Remington knew that—but she had crept into his heart and he wanted to make it easy—to postpone for a little while the beginning of her troubles.

Presently he glanced at the clock, got up, and went to the telephone.

He had plotted out the skeleton of a scheme which might be practicable—but it would call for the aid of a friend of his, one Franklin Swayne, who lived in the town some miles away.

Remington was lucky. Swayne, a wireless enthusiast, was at home preparing to spend an evening endeavouring to pick up Hong-Kong or some other place equally difficult.



"I'll get the car and run you home," he said. "She and this house on foot

This was fortunate, for Franklin Swayne was an amateur singer of unusual talent—a talent which he gave so unselfishly that his services were in almost continuous request in the district.

Remington spoke with him for a few minutes, then rang off.

He smiled as he repeated Swayne's eager acceptance of his invitation to come out and have a drink and a chat over "a very difficult wireless problem that has cropped up" in connection with his, Remington's, set.

"Certainly—I'll come at once. Soon put that right for you, Remington. No—no bother. Batteries all right, of course? Valves in order? No loose terminals? Aerial clear? Quite, quite. I'll run over. Soon get you right. Some little thing or other—eh?—yes, soon see about that for you!"

But the problem took longer than the kindly, good-looking, middle-aged man—another bachelor—who presently arrived expected.

"I expected a rather different kind of 'wireless' problem from this, you crafty old villain," he said, chuckling a little.

"Perhaps I'm a sentimental man," said Remington, slowly, staring into the fire. "Though I am not usually called that. No. Still, there's something about this business that—well, touches me. Swayne, I'd like

I are great friends, and I do not like my friends to go from on a night like this!"

very much to help this child. She's so pretty that she'll get all that's coming to her—by the time she's got to the end of her beauty—and I'd like her to be free of unhappiness as long as possible. Perhaps you'd get the idea better if you'd found her like I did. Swayne, you know, she put her foot—about as long as an ordinary twelve-bore cartridge—in my coat pocket——"

Swayne looked interested—forgot his wireless a moment.

"Eh? How d'ye mean—put her foot in your coat pocket?"

Remington leaned forward.

"Well, she did. I just dragged my coat round a bit, and she nipped it in like a man putting his foot in a stirrup. I felt her pressing down—nothing, of course—no weight—like a butterfly pressing down. She kept wriggling it about."

"Did she, though?" said Swayne, rather enviously.

"And gave a comic little kind of kick just as she went off. Yes. What struck me personally about it was the queer kind of—well, trust—she had in me. You'd think a kiddie found like that in a man's house would be scared, wouldn't you? Scared? Well, by Jove, she wasn't. I tell you, Swayne, old man, that kiddie just sat on my lap and drank that milk without a sign of fear or nervousness. Then she collared hold of my hand——"

Remington looked respectfully at the hand.

"——collared hold of my hand and dozed off as if she were in her own bed. I watched her. She went a bit pale at first."

"Pale? How d'ye mean, pale? Nothing the matter with her, was there? You rubbed her feet warm and dry, I suppose, didn't you?" demanded Swayne.

"Certainly. Until they tickled, so she said. Naturally I was extraordinarily careful about that. No—she just *seemed* to go pale for a while. Then she gradually got a slow kind of pinky tinge of colour."

"What, feverish, d'ye mean?"

"Feverish be damned, old man," said Remington, defensively. "She was as right as rain—I felt her pulse—tick, tick—like a

little faint clock. No, I suppose it's just natural to kiddies to get a colour."

"In reason, yes," grudged Mr. Swayne.

"And then she must have begun to dream or something—she started off that chanty. I tell you, Swayne, that wrung my heart—to hear her sort of whispering—'Leave her, daddy, leave her—Find another ship and another crew, for it's time for us to leave her!' Well, he's left her, eh?—he was lost with all hands in some grey-green, salt-water hell off Cape Horn."

Remington leaned forward.

"Only, you see, old man, he's always calling her. Always calling! So she thinks. And I'd be grateful if you'd contrive some wireless call that would be a kind of easy farewell from her daddy for her. See? Otherwise she's going to go on believing it's her daddy until one of these days something's coming through that will half stun her with the realization that it's not her daddy talking—or singing—and never was. See?"

Swayne nodded.

"Yes, I see. I think you're right. Just let me plot it out in my mind, will you?"

Staring deeply at the fire over his glass of whisky and soda, Swayne "plotted it out."

Remington (the pheasant-killer, the fox-hunter) watched him with a touch of anxiety. Presently Swayne began to tell himself things.

"It's not the 'phoning—that's all right. Easily connect up the headphones in the servants' hall with an ordinary house-phone. I can talk to her from the lounge. . . . She'll never know. The thing is—what are we going to *say?*"

He turned to Remington.

"It'll be no trouble to get through to the headphones what we want to tell her—but the thing is, Remington, what are you going to *say?*"

"Eh? Well, yes. We'll have to work that up somehow," agreed Remington, rather blankly. "Couldn't you fix up something, old man? What would he say? What would you say to a kiddie—your own kiddie—if you were in—well, in his position?"

"What's the good of asking *me?*" said Swayne, almost angrily. "What would a dead man say to his kiddie—if only he had the chance?"

"I don't know! Good God, I don't know! How can *I* tell?" snarled Remington. "Tell her he worshipped her, wouldn't he? He'd be a damned fool if he didn't, anyway. Things like that, I suppose. Tell her to be a good little girl and never to forget her daddy and—well, always to kneel down and to say her prayers and to take care of her mamma, and things like that."

He drained his glass.

Swayne turned his head slowly, looked at his friend with a singular, penetrating, and strangely sympathetic regard, and he, too, emptied his glass.

"Yes—that's about what he would say, I take it," he agreed. "I don't see that he could say much else. Give me another drink, will you, and if you've got a pencil and a bit of paper we'll see if we can't manage to plot out an—an outline."

All the materials were forthcoming and they settled to their task—fumbling a little, as men unfamiliar with children might fumble.

But they meant well.

Much whisky flowed and full often the siphon hissed before they had finished the laborious fiction that was to be lifelong truth for Rosalind Mary London.

But at last Swayne, his face rather strained with the effort, put down the pencil.

"Well, that's about it, I fancy," he claimed.

"Read it, old chap," demanded Remington.

SWAYNE dragged himself, with a slow, heavy effort, from the morass of literary composition and called upon his knowledge of elocution.

"I'll do my best, Remington. . . . If it's no good, tell me honestly and I'll try to find you a man who might do it better."

He cleared his throat, peering at the pencilled script before him.

"You understand, you've got to imagine I'm Rosalind's father calling. See? Really, I'm here in this lounge, she's sitting like a little quiet mouse by the earphones in the servants' hall. . . . There's nothing bothering—you'll send the servants into the town to the movies or something. . . . Right. Listen—pick me up wherever I seem to be going wrong—and we'll discuss it."

"Go ahead."

Remington settled himself into his chair to listen.

"Captain London calling! Captain London calling!"

The change of voice was so sudden, so unexpected, that Remington started, and turned to look at Swayne.

Swayne was sitting bolt upright, staring intently at the scrawled text, which he held stiffly before him.

"Captain London calling! Captain London calling!" he shouted. *"Captain London calling to Rosalind Mary London. Captain Harry London, late of the steamship*

Grace Darling, calling to his daughter, Rosalind Mary London! Listen, Rosalind! I am happy where I am, and I hope, my dear, that you are very happy. Where I am it is our duty to go away on a long journey sometimes, and I am calling you now because it is my time to go like it used to be when I joined my ship. So I shall not be able to call you any more, Rosalind, my dear, for a very long time, and I am calling now to tell you so and to say goodbye for a while, and to say to you, 'Be a good little girl and kneel down and say your prayers and take care of your mamma. Goodbye, Rosalind, good-bye!"

He cleared his throat, peering at the pencilled script before him. "Listen—pick me up wherever I seem to be going wrong."

Swayne's voice died out sharply as it began—and he turned to Remington.

"How did it sound?"

"Fine!" said Remington. "Just what a sea-captain would say, I should think. First-rate!"

Swayne seemed relieved.

"Good! I'm glad of that." He glanced at the clock. "For it's taken us a couple of hours to make it up. One of these literary johnnies might have done it in half the time! Now, what about the voice? I never heard him speak. I'd like to get that more or less right, and I don't see how we can ask his wife. It would only hurt her."

Remington nodded.

"Quite. I'll find out the firm he worked for and we'll run up and see them. Probably we'll find a clerk or somebody who's heard him speak hundreds of times, and you can try the voice over until he says you've about got it."

Swayne agreed.

III.

A FEW days later Remington called at the cottage to suggest that Rosalind might like to listen to the radio for a little while that night.

The idea received Rosalind's rapturous approval, and she paid for it on the spot with kisses.

Mrs. London, proffering tea, smiled rather

dubiously. For Remington had explained, with great labour, his plan of making things easy for the little one, and she had agreed.

"I will agree to anything that will help Rosalind to be happy for just as long as the world will let her be," she had said, looking at him rather intently. "It is kind of you to—bother." She thought for a moment. Then she sent the child out of the room on some trivial little errand.

"I would like to be there," she said.

Remington cleared his throat and looked out of the window.

"Won't it seem rather—well, a liberty—to you? Our doing this?" he asked. "Painful, I mean."

She pondered that.

"Not a liberty, but perhaps it will be painful. Only, it may be painful for my baby, too—even though it will be better for her in the end. I would like to be there because of that."

Remington understood, and they left it so.

IT was quite early in the evening when Rosalind and her mother settled down to listen to the headphones, that already were singing quietly to themselves, where they hung on each side of the fireplace.

It was a little significant that the child made no attempt to take off and adjust the headphones. She was curling up quite contentedly on the hearth under the headphones when Remington caught her up and put her in a chair.

"We can do a little better than that, my dear," he said, took down a headphone, and slipped it over her curls.

"There," he said. "Don't you like that better?"

Her eyes shone as she nodded.

Remington offered a phone to her mother, and, leaving another ready for himself, said that he would just look into the lounge and see that the set was perfectly adjusted, and then rejoin them.

He found Swayne all ready—even anxiously so—fiddling with the nest of rather sinister-looking, electrical-like devices he had been busy upon for the last few hours.

"All right, old man? They're there—listening," said Remington.

Swayne shuffled the "prompt" copy of their farewell message into a more convenient position.

"Right," he said. "There's a string band playing now. I'll cut out the wireless when I'm ready—have a little pause—then I'll start through this house phone. If anything seems not quite as it should be when my stuff comes through, just nip in and tell me—*quietly*, mind."

Remington nodded and went back.

Rosalind was leaning back in her chair, listening intently to the string band.

Probably it was a good band, for even Mrs. London seemed rapt.

Remington watched them queerly. Mother and child—each seeming intent on their own pleasure, yet, as he realized, each, grown woman and baby, ready in a flash to notice any change from the normal in the other, and, forgetting their personal abstractions, equally ready to fly to the other, asking "Why? Why? What is the matter? What can I do for you?" Yes, even that lovely little thing, Rosalind—no change in her mother's expression could pass unnoticed by her.

"Wonderful! I suppose it's something that belongs to family life—yes, family life."

Remington nodded, smiling. There was no amusement in his smile.

Outside, the rising wind fretted and whined at the windows, like something anxious to be admitted, and heavy raindrops strung themselves in gusts against the glass. It was going to prove another wild night—just such a night as Rosalind, in her dressing-gown and bedroom slippers, had braved before.

Remington slipped on his headphones, standing back, staring at Rosalind and her mother.

The waltz melody of the string band was dying away—when it finished like something cut off sharply with a keen knife. Silence.

The headphones purred softly for a moment, then were mute again—so dumb, so blank, that Remington could hear the rising gusts of wind outside press upon the panes behind the blinds, hesitate, drum impatiently, then pause and retreat—only to return.

A voice pealed in the phones.

"*Captain London calling! Captain London calling!*"

Remington saw Mrs. London sit bolt upright in her chair, and her pale, delicate face suddenly was wrung and agonized.

The baby, Rosalind, her eyes like stars, sat up, too.

"Yes, daddy, we're here! Oh, daddy—can you hear? It's Rosie—and mamma," she cried, wild with excitement.

The voice through the phones was uncertain—it was like the voice of one who shouts whilst struggling with those who are striving to prevent him from shouting.

"*Cap-tain London calling! Captain London call—calling!*"

"Captain London calling! Captain London calling!"

Remington saw Mrs. London sit bolt upright in her chair, and her pale, delicate face suddenly was wrung and agonized.

Remington listened, caught instantly by the realness of the thing.

"God, but old Franklin Swayne's a clever chap," he told himself. "This might really be some old sea-dog calling."

For so it was coming—hoarse but distinct, deep yet clear, like the utterance of a man who has shouted, through gales and the thunder of rabid waters, orders freighted with life and death.

"*Capt'n Harry London calling! Norah! Rosie!*"

Mrs. London threw out her hands.

"But it *is* Harry! Oh, I can't bear this!" she cried.

But Rosalind was alight with passionate anxiety.

"Yes, daddy—yes! Mamma and me are here," she screamed.

"*Baby!*"

The voice came like the cry of a trumpet calling across leagues of darkness and desolation.

"Daddy!"

"*Listen to me! Listen!—are you listening?*"

"Yes, daddy."

"*I shall not ever be able to speak to you again! It is very difficult for me to talk to you, Rosie—and—to you, Norah. Listen! I am going——*"

The voice broke off—then, after a pause, came again—this time charged with a passionate anxiety and appeal.

"*Capt'n London calling! Are you there, my darlings?*"

"Yes, Harry!" That was Mrs. London, aflame with excitement.

"Yes, daddy."

"*Oh, listen! I go now to a place far off—and I shall not return. Yet you shall presently come to the place where I shall wait for you. Norah! Rosie! Love one another! Do not grieve for me, for all is well with me! Be happy! I shall hear you laughing, I shall hear you playing. I shall be with you, yet I shall be far off. Rosie! Listen! It's daddy! All your life long be kind to everybody! All your life long care for everybody. It will be long and hard and full of tears. But remember always—love——*"

The voice was growing faint, dying away—it was almost as if he who spoke was being drawn forcefully out of range.

"*Love — one — another — be — kind — do — not — quite — forget — daddy——*"

Then, suddenly, with bugle abruptness, as one making a supreme effort speaks on one's death-bed—the voice rose again, pealing.

"*Remember! My wife! My baby! Be kind to all the world! As I was not! And in the end you shall bring me back to you—in another—another—place—— I shall come home to you! Good-bye! Good-bye! Baby, are you listening? Norah! Good-bye!*"

"Oh, good-bye, Harry!" It was torn from the woman.

"Daddy! Daddy! Good-bye, daddy! Daddy, can you hear? Good-bye!"

"*Baby, good-bye!*"

Those were the last words—soft as moonlight falling on still water.

The phones were silent.

REMINGTON saw that Mrs. London was removing hers with hands that trembled. They fell, and those trembling hands were stretched out to the little one who was scrambling from her chair towards them, crying bitterly.

Remington tore off his own headphones and went furiously to the lounge, where he found Swayne empty-handed, standing rigid, staring at the loud-speaker.

"Why did you alter things so?" he demanded. "Why didn't you stick to our simple little speech? You've got them both in tears, man."

"Eh?"

Swayne dragged his attention from the loud-speaker.

"I haven't spoken a word. I haven't begun! Why, I haven't even connected up!" he said. "Just as I was going to begin that Voice spoke!"

He moved closer to Remington.

"That Voice never came from any broadcasting station on earth, Remington," he said, awe-stricken. "Who was it? What was it?"

Remington shook his head.

"What do I know, Swayne?" he muttered. "I can't tell you who spoke—if it was not Captain Harry London, late of the *Grace Darling*, lost off Cape Horn with all hands six months ago."

"But—a dead man!"

Swayne switched on the radio. A jazz band brayed at him from some restaurant. He switched off hurriedly.

Remington threw out his hands in a queer humble gesture of helplessness, then turned and went back to the woman and her baby.

He found them interlocked, weeping, but each trying to comfort the other—being kind.

CROSS-WORDS

By

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

Illustrated by
FRED PURVIS

I.

FERBANE, as a journalist, was earning enough for one, but not quite enough for two, when he became engaged to Miss Elsie Cutting, the daughter of his landlady, who had known happier days. It is to Mrs. Cutting's credit that when she found herself an impoverished widow she turned Magnolia House into a lodging-house and herself into a fairly competent lodging-house-keeper. Within a year she had come to the conclusion that in her line of business it was easier to please young bachelors than old spinsters. She specialized, so to speak, in City clerks, who spoke of her behind her back as "Mother Cutting." She "mothered" all of them.

Jim Ferbane, perhaps, was a favourite, because he was remotely connected with a West Country baronet. Jim had an aquiline nose and thin, sensitive nostrils; he could wear shabby tweeds "with an air." He had a soft, finely modulated voice.

Elsie and he fell ears over head in love at sight.

Mrs. Cutting, constrained to accept facts however unpalatable, sanctioned the engagement. She could not envisage Jim as a money-maker. Incidentally, one of the lodgers, a clerk with get-rich-quick potentialities, left the house in a huff unable to endure the sight of Jim as his successful rival. Mrs. Cutting commented on this to Elsie.

"You could have had *him*——"

"I know."

"It was your first really good chance."

"I dare say——"

"You prefer to carry on with Mr. Ferbane."

"He is such a dear. Carrying on, you know, is a business expression. It means carrying over. No settling day in sight."

"I fail to follow you, child."

"I mean, mother, that Jim can't afford to marry me. But his stock is booming."

"This is the first I've heard of it."

"You can take it from me, dear, that Jim is making good."

Mrs. Cutting shrugged her shoulders. Elsie was a typist and stenographer, "on her own." No wise mother argues with these independent creatures, and some of them talk a City patter hard to understand. Elsie, if she chose, could marry Mr. Ferbane and march with him out of her mother's house. That would mean the loss of three lodgers.

Next day Jim had to be explicit with Elsie's mother, who asked tartly:—

"Can you tell me, Mr. Ferbane, of any change in your fortunes which justifies this engagement to my daughter?"

"There has been a change, a slight increase of salary."

"Permanent?"

"Not exactly."

"Under the circumstances I think I have the right to demand full confidence."

Jim nodded.

"Yes; I understand. But you see what I am planning is in the nature of secret service. My success depends largely upon not letting my left hand know what my right hand does. Still—to you——"

He paused.

"I mind my own business," replied Mrs. Cutting, "but this *is* my business."

"True enough. Strictly between our two selves (I have not breathed a word to Elsie), I will tell you, only you, that I have a queer sort of gift for Cross-Word Puzzles."

Mrs. Cutting looked astounded. Cross-

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Word Puzzles, from her point of view, afforded entertainment to many persons with time to waste upon such innocent amusements. Both she and Elsie "did" these puzzles. Elsie "competed." Elsie had wasted not only time over them, but shillings which she could ill spare. At the same time Elsie had pointed out to her mother that the hunt after the right word enlarged the vocabulary of a typist and stenographer. Certainly it had done nothing else.

"You have won a big prize?"

Mrs. Cutting spoke incredulously, well aware that if the young man had won anything worth having she would have heard of it.

"Only Elsie. I have a gift, Mrs. Cutting, not for winning these very tricky competitions, but for inventing them."

"*Inventing* them?"

"Yes. Really it's my job to see to it that nobody wins the big prize. The second prize is divided up between a number of competitors who make one or more mistakes. You understand, of course, that space in a big paper is valuable. It must be paid for. Our competitions are a small gold-mine to us. I am not at liberty to tell you how many postal orders for a shilling pass under my nose. If I did you would be amazed."

"Really? Well, I don't understand how you can prevent somebody winning the big prize!"

"Because the odds are tremendously against anybody doing so. I see to that," Mr. Ferbane chuckled humorously; "that is where I come in. My puzzles appear so easy. But there are always at least eight words in each upon which changes can be rung. Do you happen to know how many changes can be rung upon a peal of eight bells?"

"I do not."

"Nor do I. Many too many. If a clever competitor sent in all the possible solutions to one of my puzzles he would bankrupt himself in shillings."

"I'm still in the dark."

"I'll give you one example. In the middle of my last puzzle I had a word of eight letters. My clue was a seaside place in England. Black squares enclosed on three sides the first three letters. The last five letters were M—O—U—T—H. A child could have guessed those. But the first three letters might have been Sid—Yar—Fal—Wey—Lyn—Ply—and half-a-dozen more. In the same puzzle were three words of four letters each. Take one—a useful vegetable product, obviously beginning with C—O—R. But the last letter ended in a *cul-de-sac*. It might be K, or N, or D. Cork, corn, and cord are vegetable products. Now ring the changes on all these and where are you, I ask?"

"I should be in a lunatic asylum," said Mrs. Cutting. "However, you have told me what I wanted to know. You are being well paid for this, but I should imagine that the British Public, however stupid it may be, will get fed up with these puzzles. Then your increased salary will be cut down again."

"I shall think of something else, Mrs. Cutting. Meanwhile, I am putting by for a house and lot. Please remember that our Chief and you are the only persons who know that every week I do a puzzle with a thousand-guinea prize tacked on to it. I hand my solution to the Chief, and he locks it up in his safe. Now and again, not too often, it is politic to send in a puzzle that is solved. The happy solver gets his thousand guineas and a lot of publicity."

"How does he get publicity?"

"His name and address are published. Why, if you won one of these big prizes more than a million of our readers would be interested in *you*. Begging letters would reach you by the next post."

"What an advertisement for Magnolia House!"

"You bet. All the same, you were wise to give up competing."

"From what you say I'm beginning to think I wasn't."

"Bless your dear simple heart! Haven't I made it plain that you wouldn't have a dog's chance?"

"One never knows one's luck."

"I know mine when I look at Elsie."

II.

JIM bought a modest engagement-ring, and the young couple were content with that. Each was saving money against "settling day." Each faced the future confidently, believing that happiness must be earned. We can leave them for the moment, blissfully unconscious of what the future held in store for them, and return to Mrs. Cutting.

The loss of a well-to-do lodger, who might have been a son-in-law, was borne with equanimity, but, unhappily, the announcement of Elsie's engagement fell with devastating effect upon two other gentlemen who settled their weekly bills with satisfying regularity. They left Magnolia House within three weeks!

The Great Strike followed. Industrials dependent upon coal "slumped." To the consternation of Mrs. Cutting an expected dividend was "passed." Her lawyer explained to her the vital connection between iron, coal, and steel. He made it plain that

if she sold her shares she would do so at a loss. When the strike was over, dividends would not be passed —and so forth.

Mrs. Cutting was sorely disconcerted. The strike became as an issue personal to her. It became even more so when she found herself "rationed" by her coal merchant. Lodgers demanded plenty of hot water in their baths. She began to miss her country customers, who came up to London for a week's shopping. A restricted train service did not encourage good sensible people to leave home.

In a few weeks tradesmen for whom the passed dividend had been earmarked began to press claims with a smug civility not to be mistaken. Finally, a harassed woman was assailed by insomnia.

Jim Ferbane's bed-sitting-room adjoined her bedroom. Lying awake, tingling with suppressed irritations (for she kept her troubles to herself), Mrs. Cutting could hear the clicking of the young man's typewriter. It clicked intermittently. Trains, rumbling underground, would arouse her from uneasy dozings. Her brain seemed to be more active whenever her body lay still. The spectre, Poverty, gibbered at her, as a bell from a neighbouring church tolled the slowly-passing hours. It was incredible that she should be disturbed by these familiar noises. Still—it was so. In the mornings she fell asleep and awoke weary and intolerably limp.

Eventually she had to discharge an upper-housemaid and quietly took her place. When Elsie—absent every day at the office—discovered this, she protested vehemently, but Mrs. Cutting replied: "I shall not engage the first hussy that presents herself. I am managing very well. A charwoman comes in twice a week to do the heavy cleaning." Elsie said, quickly: "But you don't *have* to do this." Whereupon Mrs. Cutting dissembled, and Elsie murmured that evening to Jim: "Mother is taking to

"Jim can't afford to marry me, mother."

pinching in her old age. I believe she likes it."

III.

JIM and Elsie always went off to their work immediately after breakfast, leaving the coast clear for Mrs. Cutting's activities. She "did" three rooms: her own, Elsie's, and Jim's. The under-housemaid was busy enough attending to the rest of the house and couldn't endure being "fussed," so wisely her mistress left her alone.

It is possible that Mrs. Cutting liked "doing" Jim's room. She overhauled his wardrobe without arousing his suspicions; she lingered now and again over photographs and books. In some of the books were bookplates, the Ferbane coat of arms. Above the mantelpiece hung a line of tiny portraits in silhouette, black touched up with gold lines. There was a mezzotint of Admiral Ferbane, who fought under Nelson, and two miniatures of Ferbane ladies. All this was grist to a fond mother's mill. Obviously the Ferbanes were of good, sound stock, nothing aristocratically vicious about any of them. Jim's modest possessions revealed him to Mrs. Cutting illuminatingly. She had noticed in the bedrooms of gentleman-like clerks objects that provoked frowns and sniffs. One audacious youth had removed an ormolu clock that wouldn't go and placed under a sacrosanct glass shade the soiled satin slipper of some dancer. He boasted that he had drunk champagne out of it! Jim owned no such questionable trophies.

Mrs. Cutting decided that Elsie was lucky in getting Jim. It was certain that the child would never have any "trouble" with him, nothing which she vaguely designated as "nasty." She decided, too, that he would make good in his profession. He might become editor of *The Banner*, or write a novel, or even a play. But Elsie affirmed that her Jim would not soil his nice clean mind by attempting to write what London playgoers demanded.

"The dear child might have done so much worse," reflected Mrs. Cutting.

Jim's desk was fairly tidy for a literary gentleman. Upon it lay "returned" scripts, the short stories written slowly at night, when the typewriting machine ticked intermittently. Mrs. Cutting knew that he wrote and re-wrote his "stuff," and that about one story out of four was "accepted." Jim liked to read these stories aloud to Elsie and her mother. Elsie pronounced them "lovely." Mrs. Cutting, nourished on the works of Miss Charlotte Yonge, said kindly that nobody need be ashamed of writing them.

By the desk stood a huge waste-paper basket.

Mrs. Cutting emptied it, as usual, upon a Thursday morning in September.

At that moment some imp of comedy took possession of a good and God-fearing woman. No other hypothesis can explain adequately what followed. Perhaps she was at a low ebb physically and mentally. She saw a lot of torn paper covered with pencil scribblings. She remembered that Jim had left Elsie on the previous evening with the remark: "I've work to do that must be turned in to-morrow." She had heard his machine clicking at two in the morning.

Conviction somehow settled upon her that she was staring at a scrap-heap which concealed one thousand guineas. She recalled the intermittent clicking, which had not lasted long; but long enough, so the imp suggested, to make a fair copy of a solution which was now in his Chief's safe.

Mrs. Cutting's first thought—so she admitted afterwards—was humorous. Jim, to quote Elsie, took liberties with the leg of his future mother-in-law. He chaffed her slyly; he poked fun at her Victorian ways. The thousand guineas puzzle would appear on a Saturday. Readers of *The Daily Banner* were able to devote the whole of Sunday to the task of solving it. Mrs. Cutting's own lodgers would attempt the impossible task. Indeed, to secure favour with them, an up-to-date popular dictionary had been bought by a thoughtful landlady and placed in the "lounge."

What fun it would be, to be sure, to present the confounded Jim with a successful solution! And what "publicity" for her!

Having turned the waste-paper basket upside down, she reflected that the more finished efforts would be found at the bottom of the heap. Being in no hurry she took her time, making haste methodically, piecing together innumerable sheets of foolscap.

Doing this with a pertinacity worthy of a better cause, Jim rose steadily in her estimation as a resourceful personality. Obviously, as a framer of these puzzles, he wished to eliminate the professional solver without discouraging the less literate rank and file.

Finally, alone in her own room with a paste-pot, she put together what seemed to be the real right thing. Jim, in his enthusiasm, secure, too, in his conviction that a young and silly housemaid would never have the wit to explore his waste-paper basket, had worked out his final problem in ink. Previous efforts had been made in pencil.

Mrs. Cutting chuckled.

IV.

UPON Saturday two weeks later, a Win-a-House or a Thousand Guineas problem was presented to a million readers of *The Banner*. Not one, it may be presumed, studied the "clues" with greater interest than Mrs. Cutting. Once again she decided that her future son-in-law was a clever fellow. More, it was humanly certain that the solver of a problem so difficult would secure immeasurable *publicity*.

She could not doubt that she would secure even more publicity when she returned the first prize to Jim's Chief with an explanatory letter.

She filled in the coupon, observing all the rules imposed, pinned to it a postal order for one shilling, wrote her name and address in block letters upon the back of the envelope, posted the precious missive herself, and awaited, with more chucklings, the publicity that must be hers by right of woman's wit.

Finally, with a paste-pot, she put together what seemed to be the real right thing.

Everything turned out, at first, according to plan. A fortnight later Mrs. Cutting was announced as the only competitor who had sent in a correct solution; to her, therefore, was awarded the first prize of a House and Lot in Suburbia, or, if she preferred it, a cheque for one thousand guineas.

To make matters easier, the imp in possession saw to it that Jim was temporarily out of action. His Chief had dispatched him to Glasgow on business connected with a famous trial. Elsie, too, since her engagement, had wasted no time over Cross-Word Puzzles. And so it came to pass that a lodger in wild excitement spread the good news from basement to garret of Magnolia House.

He happened to see Elsie prinked for morning church.

"I say," he gasped. "Do you know that your mother has won the 'Win-a-House Competition'?"

"Impossible!"

"Here! Look for yourself."

Elsie looked. Then she sank into a chair. She saw "writing" on the wall of the "lounge." A message seemed to be traced by the finger of Providence. Nothing stood between her and "settling day" except the lack of a house and lot.

She was not, as a rule, emotional, but she burst into tears. The lodger exclaimed, solemnly:—

"This is perfectly splendid, Miss Cutting. I mean it's so exactly right for you and Ferbane, isn't it?"

"Yes, it's really too good to be true," sobbed the happy Elsie.

"But it *is* true. There can be no doubt whatever about it. Surely your mother has seen the paper?"

Dabbing at her eyes, Elsie considered this. Likely as not her mother had not seen the paper. Perhaps she was so inured to disappointments that she had not taken the trouble to look at it.

"Let's tell her. Do you mind my coming? I saw the wonderful news first."

Elsie raised no objections. Mrs. Cutting was found on a landing upstairs, also prinked for Divine Service, and carrying an ivory Prayer Book that had belonged to her mother.

To Elsie's amazement she betrayed no excitement. She had seen the paper, but she kept this to herself. She said, calmly:—

"We shall be late for church, child."

"Heavens! I can't go to church. Can you?"

"Church," replied Mrs. Cutting, austerely, "would seem to be indicated as the fitting place in which to offer up our thanksgivings."

"That had not occurred to me," said the lodger.

"Do you realize, mother, what all this means?"

"Better than you do, my dear. Are you coming with me?"

"No, I'm not. I've been crying, and I look a sight. Besides, I couldn't pay attention to the service. You're a wonder,

mother; you are indeed. I wish I were like you, but I'm not. Houses and lots don't drop out of my skies every day."

Mrs. Cutting went to church.

During a dull sermon she had leisure to reflect upon the horrible disappointment that she had imposed—thoughtlessly, it is true—upon a good daughter. Jim's absence had, as he would have put it, "queered her pitch." She had intended to tell Jim the truth on the Saturday night. The more she considered the matter, the more difficult it became to tell Elsie till Jim returned on the following Tuesday. Wisely, or otherwise, she decided to mark time. However, a word of warning would not be amiss. Accordingly, just before luncheon, when her astounding good luck would provoke general congratulations, she spoke that warning word.

"We mustn't count our chickens till they are hatched. There may have been a mistake. There may be other claims."

"Oh, no. It is such a coincidence that you should win this big prize offered by Jim's paper. I have been thanking God, mother, that Jim has nothing to do with these puzzles, because if he had he would be accused of giving away the solution."

"I never thought of that," said Mrs. Cutting, uneasily.

PUBLICITY overwhelmed her on Monday morning. A reporter from *The Banner* called at Magnolia House. A paragraph appeared in an evening paper. Before nightfall several persons demanded eagerly board and lodging. Two begging letters came by the last post.

So far, so good; Mrs. Cutting's desire for publicity had been abundantly gratified. Indeed, she looked and felt like a prize-winner. But Elsie was sorely puzzled, because her mother, as a rule practical in all things, had not made up her mind whether she would accept the title deeds of the house and lot or a cheque for a thousand guineas. To add to her bewilderment, Mrs. Cutting expressed no wish to see the house and lot, saying blandly:—

"Let us wait till Jim returns."

Now foresight is proverbially better than hindsight. It did occur to Mrs. Cutting after Jim came back from Glasgow on Tuesday afternoon that she ought to have insisted on seeing Jim's Chief, and, taking him into full confidence, might have thereby secured his sympathy and, up to a point, his co-operation.

Jim burst into her sitting-room before Elsie returned from her work. And what a Jim! He looked travel-stained, haggard, and white to the gills.

"I have lost my job," he said, excitedly.

Even then it didn't occur to Mrs. Cutting that too often the innocent have to expiate the sins of the guilty.

"I am sacked," continued Mr. Ferbane. "I am utterly discredited. I leave my Chief's service without a thread of character."

"Won't you sit down and explain?"

Jim glared at her.

"I suppose you are aware, because you must have read it on the printed page, that no member on the staff of *The Banner* is allowed to compete for our prizes. My Chief did not know that I boarded with you, but somebody put him wise to that. As soon as I reached Fleet Street he sent for me. He accuses me, ME, of having betrayed his trust—and so I have. I'm not a fool. I know that somehow, somewhen, you got at my private papers, scraps that I should have burned, and pieced them together. It's useless to deny it. This particular problem was insoluble. The man who won the second prize had three mistakes. Three more competitors had four. Seventy thousand competed. Pray don't interrupt me. You have won this prize. My Chief can't prove that you haven't won it fairly. And besides, it isn't his policy to repudiate payment. Now, I want to ask you one question before I leave your house: *Is Elsie in this?*"

Mrs. Cutting replied with dignity:—

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself to ask such a question. I—I——" her voice faltered, "wanted to play a little joke on you. I'm afraid it has fallen rather flat."

"You call this a joke?"

"It was intended as such. You, and Elsie, have accused me of having no sense of humour. In a gentlemanly way, I admit, you have ridiculed my old-fashioned ways. I wanted to get even with you, to enjoy a laugh at your expense. I have not the slightest intention of accepting this prize."

Jim was too dazed to say anything.

"I will own up to this and no more," continued Mrs. Cutting. "I did hanker after a little publicity—and I have got it. Now, perhaps, you will be good enough to call a taxi, and we will go together to your Chief."

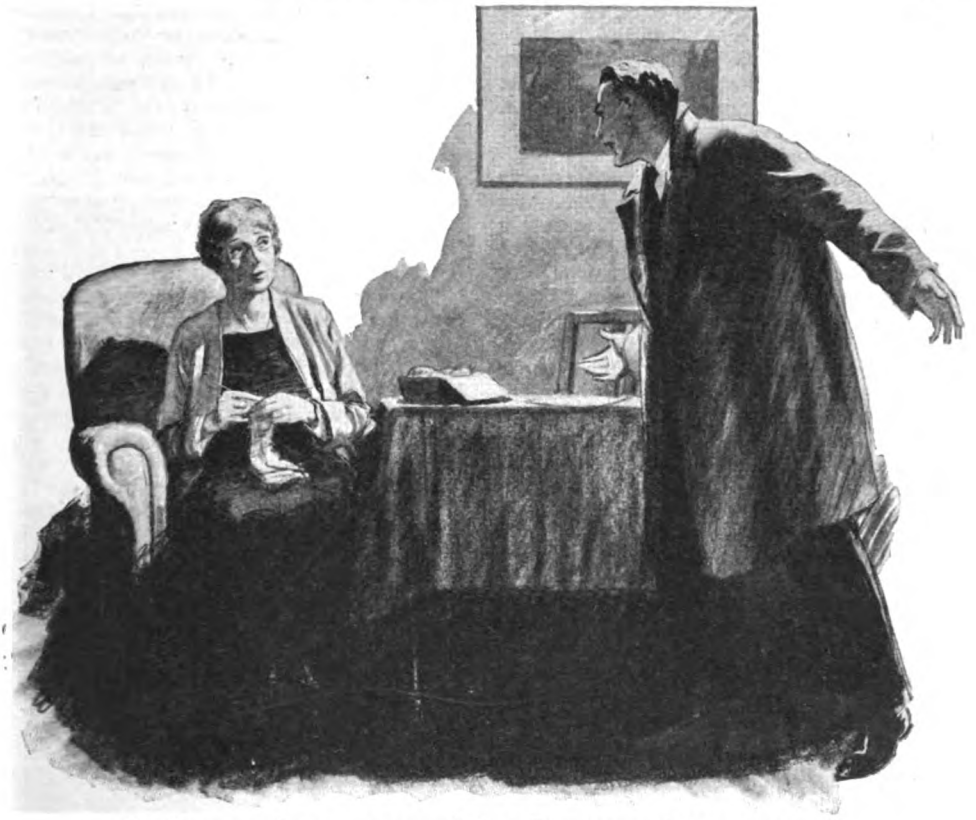
Jim sat down and began to fill his pipe.

"I know my Chief, and you don't. He may be very rude to you; he won't accept your story. When I swore by all the gods that I was innocent he smiled at me pityingly and told me that I was too innocent to serve him."

"Oh, dear," sighed Mrs. Cutting.

"Thanks to you, I am not likely to be serving anybody else. I must break off my engagement with Elsie simply because I have no prospects whatever to offer her."

At this moment Elsie appeared.



Jim burst into her sitting-room before Elsie returned from her work. "I have lost my job," he said, excitedly.

Within five minutes she was in possession of the facts, and aflame with indignation because it leaked out that her lover had asked if she were "in this." She eyed Jim disdainfully.

"You ought to have guessed that it was a joke. To accuse my mother and then—*me*. Do we look criminals? Do we?"

Somehow Jim felt that the ladies had turned the tables on him, a disconcerting experience for any man. He stammered out:—

"I don't think you've quite got it. I—I've lost my job. A joke is no joke when it inflicts serious injury upon another person."

"Tupper!" exclaimed Elsie. "Please don't inflict moth-eaten tags on me. It's easy enough for a man to get a job, or a girl, but it's not easy to keep either of them. I am intensely humiliated. Why did you surrender? I believe an action could be brought for defamation of character. You have behaved like a worm."

"Possibly. Let me tell you that subordinates in newspaper offices are worms. I feel like a worm at this moment. All I can do is to wriggle out of this room."

He went out, carrying his head at an angle not affected by worms. Elsie turned upon her mother.

"Now that we are alone, I must say that your idea of a joke is not mine. I suppose even a joke, good or bad, must be judged by its results. Jim has lost his job. I have lost Jim; but you are left with the house and lot."

"Oh, dear," wailed Mrs. Cutting.

"*And your publicity.* I forgot that. Yes, mother, you come out of this rather well, but I'd take the thousand guineas if I were you."

Overcome by her emotions, Miss Cutting rushed out. The door slammed behind her.

"Cross-Words," murmured Mrs. Cutting.

V.

THE Editor-in-Chief of *The Daily Banner* happened to dine that evening at his club, the Gridiron, and he dined well. After dinner he exchanged a few words with a fellow-member who was a Cabinet Minister, kind words, which gladdened two stout hearts. Accordingly, the Great Man

returned to Fleet Street on excellent terms with himself, his paper, and all the world.

As soon as he was seated at his vast desk, an acolyte informed the high priest that a lady of the name of Cutting desired to see him for five minutes on a matter of urgent private importance.

"Cutting? Cutting? The name seems oddly familiar, but it conveys absolutely nothing to me beyond its obvious association with some press-clipping agency."

"Mrs. Cutting, sir, has just won our 'Win-a-House' Cross-Words Competition."

"So she did, or didn't." He scowled at his acolyte. "I can't see Mrs. Cutting. You may tell her with or without my compliments that I have business of urgent *public* importance to attend to."

"Very good, sir."

Left alone, the Great Man lit a fresh cigar, still scowling, unable to purge his mind of a very regrettable incident which he had cast as rubbish to the void that afternoon. In less than a minute the acolyte came back.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but Miss Cutting——"

"*Miss* Cutting?"

"A young lady, sir."

"Well?"

"She will wait till you have leisure to receive her."

"Tchah! Tell her to go to—— No, stay! What is she like? A powdered, lipsticked minx?"

"Far from it, sir. She looks a most capable young lady."

"Show her in."

ELSIE entered demurely, bright-eyed, alert to her finger-tips, but not defiant. She wore a trim blue serge suit and a becoming "cloche" hat. She was well-shod and well-gloved.

"Sit down," commanded the Autocrat, indicating a not too comfortable chair near his desk. Importunate visitors never lingered long in it. "I can guess why you have come here."

"Do you know, sir, that I am, or rather I was, engaged to be married to Mr. Ferbane?"

"Um! I didn't know that. Go on."

"You discharged him this afternoon, because you thought he was an unscrupulous rascal."

"Either that or a negligent fool. I have no use for either"

"Nor have I"

Shrewd eyes twinkled at her.

"So that is why you are no longer engaged to James Ferbane?"

"It is the other way about. You lost Mr. Ferbane because you thought him a knave, and I've lost him because I thought him a fool. He happens to be neither."

"Really? I hardly know you well enough, Miss Cutting, to accept unhesitatingly your word for that."

"Perhaps not, but you know *him*. Has he ever let you down before?"

"Men in my service are not given the opportunity of letting me down twice."

"You don't look a hard man," said Elise, thoughtfully.

"No flowers, Miss Cutting."

"You guessed right about one thing," continued Elsie. "The prize was not won honestly. The torn-up solution was found by my mother in Mr. Ferbane's waste-paper basket. The final rough copy was in ink. So my mother, out of a pile of scraps, had little difficulty in piecing it together. Then she was tempted——"

"This is a painful story for you."

"Not at all. Why do you publish Cross-Word Puzzles?"

"To increase the circulation of the paper."

"Incidentally, too, you must be snowed in with postal orders."

The Great Man smiled. He was beginning to be interested in the story and the story-teller.

"You want what every editor wants—publicity. My mother, who keeps a lodging-house, hankered after the same thing. Well, she has achieved her ends as you have achieved yours. To-day we have no apartments to let, except Mr. Ferbane's bed-sitting-room. Mother never intended to keep the prize. She would have told Mr. Ferbane on the morning when the result was published, but you had sent him to Scotland. She ought, of course, to have taken you into her confidence, but, unfortunately, she had not seen you. If you saw her, you would know at a glance, being the man you are, that she is incapable of being the woman you think her to be."

"Um! After meeting you, I should like to meet your mother. You say she refuses to accept this big prize?"

"That goes without saying."

"Perhaps when you say so it does. But I am placed in rather an awkward position. The first prize, mark you, was advertised to be awarded to a *correct* solution of the puzzle. No correct solution, except your mother's, was sent in. I am not asking how she arrived at a correct solution, so far as she is concerned. I awarded the first prize to her, and my decision is final. If no correct solution had been sent in, the second prize would be given to the person entitled to it, who did not send in a *correct* solution. Nobody,

therefore, will be wronged if matters are left where they are. If I take back this first prize my books will show a thousand guineas in excess of my balance. Many persons have access to my books, including my auditors. The story would have to come out sooner or later."

Elsie smiled, displaying an ingratiating row of teeth.

"That would mean more publicity for you and mother."

The Autocrat laughed. Elsie laughed with him, because she knew that the situation was saved. At this moment the acolyte appeared with a formidable pile of "proofs," which he placed at his Chief's side and then withdrew. As the door closed behind him, Elsie jumped up.

"Sit down, Miss Cutting. That entrance and exit were stage-managed. I have to get rid of bores discreetly. You are not a bore. But, very regretfully, I must ask you to leave me after I have delivered my—my ultimatum."

"Certainly."

"You have paid me one or two little compliments which I appreciate. I pay you the compliment of believing your story——"

"Thank you, sir."

"But I decline to publish it, and I decline, again regretfully, to give your mother further publicity. In my considered opinion she has earned the first prize. If she hasn't, you have. I repeat, my decision in this matter is final. You can tell your mother from me that if her conscience forbids her accepting a house and lot, she can pass both on to you and James Ferbane. You can tell him also from me that he is reinstated."

"But, at the moment, we are not on speaking terms."

"I understand — cross-words! They must not be taken too seriously, except by readers of *The Banner*. Good night."

As he rose, he held out his hand. Elsie gripped it in fervent gratitude. Then she hurried to the door.

"Wait!"

Elsie turned to behold the Great Man standing erect by his chair. Expressively he raised a finger to his lips; he whispered, dramatically:—

"Mum."

"I have not called her that for years," said Elsie, "but I shall do so to-night."

"After meeting you," said the Great Man, "I should like to meet your mother. You say she refuses to accept this big prize?"

THESE THRILLING ARTICLES ARE FACT—NOT FICTION.

Mr. H. Ashton-Wolfe.

Cases from My Crime-Book

By

H. ASHTON-WOLFE

(Interpreter at the Criminal Courts.)

THE AUTHOR INTRODUCES HIMSELF

Since the war I have ceased to be exclusively engaged in criminal investigation abroad, but my profession as interpreter has brought me constantly in touch with the great criminal investigation centres of the world, and I have many times become intimate with some of the more interesting criminals of modern times.

It was quite by chance that I became involved in scientific investigation and began to study the psychology of crime. Probably because I come of a mixed ancestry, many languages are as mother tongues to me, and, although I am a Londoner, I have always been a wanderer from land to land, roaming the earth since my boyhood. My father, Dr. W. Wolfe, of Edinburgh, went to America when a young man and became an officer in the 8th U.S. Cavalry, stationed at Fort Union, near Pueblo, New Mexico. It was in the West that he met my mother, the daughter of a Scottish rancher who had chosen a bride from the old Spanish stock, as so many did in the wild pioneer days. Thus, although I was born in London during a visit of my parents to England, I spent my early years on the vast ranges of Colorado and Arizona and was taught how to ride and shoot by the red-skinned Sioux warriors, who, strangely enough, enjoyed showing a white boy their tricks. Until I was fourteen I went to school in Denver, and later completed my education in France and Germany, taking a degree in Heidelberg.

Whilst a pupil and assistant of Dr. Bertillon in Paris, I found the study of criminology so absorbing, so exciting, and so full of opportunities for encountering the weird and fantastic, that I threw myself heart and soul into the work. My knowledge of languages and familiarity with most of Europe's great cities caused me to be chosen very often when investigations were necessary in other countries. I have in this manner been enabled to collect a sheaf of unusual cases.

The stories which I have selected for this series can be found in the official records, only one or two details having been rearranged in order to avoid giving pain and reopening old wounds.

I have myself taken part either in the investigation or the final trials of the criminals. Several of the cases I have specially selected because of the ingenuity displayed both by the law-breakers and by the investigators.

No1-LATOUCHE THE APACHE

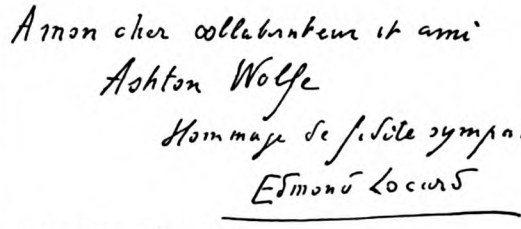
A STORY OF THE PARIS UNDERWORLD

EVERY nation has its own peculiar type of criminal, and he is without doubt the materialization of its faults and vices and the true expression of what that nation would be were it suddenly deprived of conscience and restraint. He is a distorted image of the people ; like a reflection in a curved mirror, the individual features are all there and clearly recognizable, but the whole is grotesque and ugly. Thus the Parisian criminal is a type apart, the product of that great city and the child of its sins.

Vain, pleasure-loving, heartless, sordid, callous, cruel, and sentimental, he can be brave to excess, or cringingly cowardly. This startling string of adjectives is needed to paint the Apache, knight of the lesser boulevards and treasured possession of the Frivolous Capital. No other city breeds him. Perhaps New York and Chicago run

Dr. Edmond Locard, Chief of the technical police laboratories of Lyons, France, who has continued the researches of M. Bertillon, the celebrated inventor of the finger-print system, and who investigated many of the cases described in this series. This photograph was presented to the author with the inscription, in French :—

" To my dear collaborator and friend, Ashton-Wolfe. A token of faithful friendship.
" Edmond Locard."



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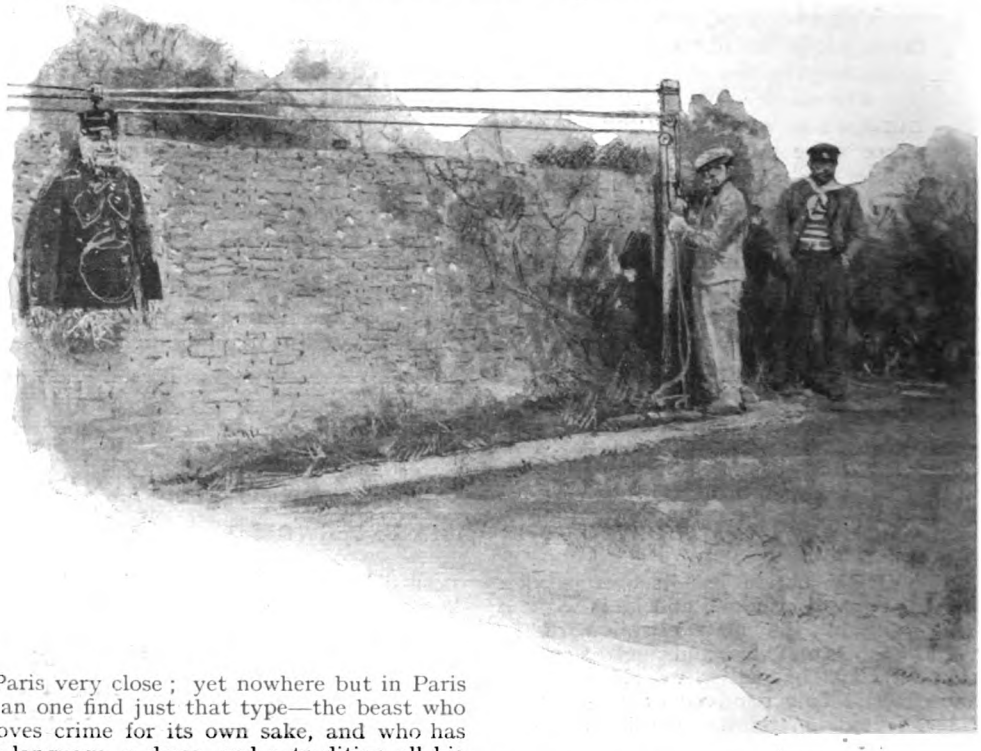


Paris very close ; yet nowhere but in Paris can one find just that type—the beast who loves crime for its own sake, and who has a language, a dress, and a tradition all his own.

Many stories have been written about the Apache. The name was given to him by the Press, and seized upon by the public as aptly expressing the ferocity of his kind, akin to that of the Redskin of pioneer days. But most of the stories, and also the films that deal with him, prove that the writers knew nothing whatever about the psychology of the Parisian bandit. Very few Englishmen ever lose their accent sufficiently to be able to seek him in his haunts. Fewer still ever learn to speak his peculiar " argot."

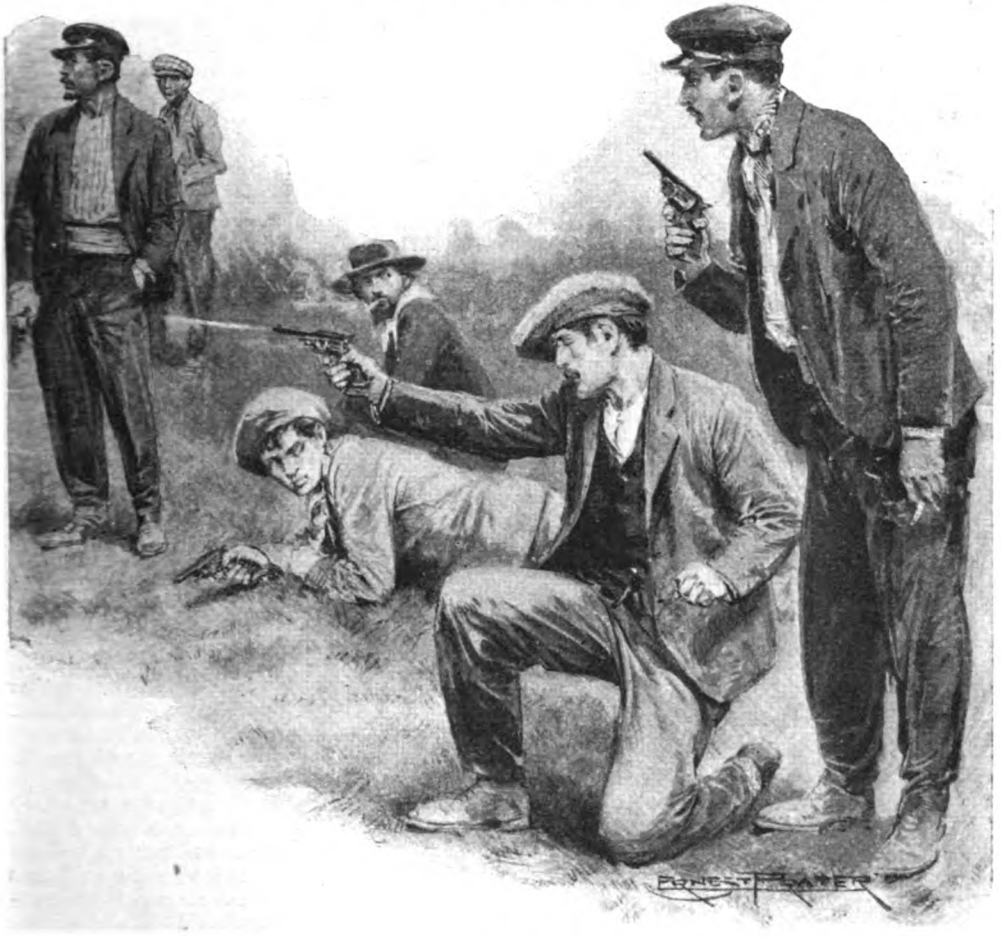
It is only because my profession brought me continually in contact with these savage outlaws that little by little I began to sense something of their mentality. Forced as I was to make a close study of their life, their dress, and their language, in order to be able to approach them as one of themselves, I began to understand their point of view. Many of them were well educated. I remember one day finding several of the tribe reading poetry. Yet these men had killed more than twelve people with cold, calculating ferocity and held a regiment of police and soldiers at bay for a whole day, until dynamite put an end to their career.

Of all these monsters, however, Latouche —nicknamed l'Aristo (the gentleman)— was the worst. Young, handsome, and of good family, he had begun life as a medical student. A woman and a scandal forced him to leave Paris for a time. He went to Egypt and for a period was engaged in smuggling opium into France. For this he was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. He managed to escape, and, posing as a Belgian, joined the Foreign Legion. He served in Africa and the East, and survived, but, like most of those who have passed through that inferno, he returned a devil incarnate. Yet when first he was pointed out to me I could hardly believe that the tales I had heard of him were true.

Latouche was short and slim, with small feet and hands. His features were regular and pleasing, and his tiny black moustache and small pointed chin gave him the appearance of a modest *employé*, bank clerk, or accountant. Only the eyes struck a jarring discord, and their regard always produced in me that sudden tightening of the spinal nerves which the unexpected appearance of a deadly reptile causes. They were small, black, set obliquely and close together ; but the horrible thing about them was their utter lack of expression, as though a membrane covered them—instinctively one divined the loathsome mind behind their unseeing gaze. Somewhere, I feel sure, there was a strain of the Mongol in Latouche, and this the colour and texture of his skin proclaimed also. Tartar or

Hun—the hereditary influence of a yellow forbear was unmistakable.

Perhaps I am peculiarly sensitive to the human aura, that intangible something emanating from everyone, which I believe is merely the vibration of their thoughts and personality reacting on the subconscious mind. Often I have noticed that certain men, when first I encounter them, paint themselves on my imagination in a form which has nothing in common with their appearance. Thus the picture evoked when I looked at Latouche was that of a lank-haired, yellow-robed savage, slaying, burning, and destroying with glee, while in my ears sounded the shrieks and groans of his victims. That he did not produce this impression on everyone I know, for many were the women who loved him, to their cost; and the last of these was that unhappy young French-Canadian, Enid Hardy, who paid for her folly with her life.



Several men were firing with revolvers at a target composed of an old policeman's tunic and cap, which moved by means of a tackle of ropes and pulleys.

IT was at the time that M. Lepine, the energetic and aggressive little Prefect of Police, had decided that his army of policemen should be taught Japanese wrestling and jiu-jitsu that we first heard of a new power among the Apaches and Anarchists, whose "club" was at Romainville, in the house where their paper, *L'Anarchie*, was edited and printed.

The neighbours, whose windows overlooked the garden at the back of this house, informed the police several times that a shooting gallery and a gymnasium had been installed there. One day M. Dufresne, the Chief of the Paris Sûreté, called me into his office and said with a grin:—

"Les Apaches are in favour of a proper methodical apprenticeship, I hear. Soon they will insist that a new member to the brotherhood shall pass an examination before being admitted. We are hopelessly old-fashioned, I am afraid. But perhaps it is not too late to learn. This will amuse you; go and see what it is all about," and he threw a letter across to me.

"*Monsieur*," it began, coldly and formally, "*whilst the police sleep or spend their leisure hours playing cards, the assassins, robbers, and footpads ply their fearful trade with impunity. They train themselves assiduously like any honest athlete—and that, too, under our very noses. They laugh at you and the anachronisms who call themselves members of the Sûreté. In the last few days we, the undersigned, citizens of our glorious Republic, have been able to watch and learn, mais oui, monsieur, to learn even—how to handle the 'surin' so that the blade instantly reaches the vitals, to throw the scarf around a victim's neck and choke him, 'le coup du père François,' and many other Apache methods of robbing and slaying the hard-working bourgeois. Monsieur, you would have pleasure to see a bandit dressed as a policeman attacked and overcome. It is a school for crime, monsieur—but, yes—under our windows. I do not suppose for a moment that this interests you, but should it do so—those windows are at your disposal!*"

Then came a number of signatures and the address.

I expressed my astonishment at this extraordinary letter. "Go and see," said M. Dufresne. "I do not suppose it is more than just a little Apache fun, but we may as well know."

I looked at the address and saw that the letter had come from the Rue de la Barre at Romainville.

WHEN I arrived there I was received by a little wizened old man who conducted me with a great show of mystery to a back room on the second floor of his house. Looking out of the window, I saw that the garden of the notorious headquarters of *L'Anarchie* was below me; I had arrived at an hour when training was in full swing. Near the house several men were standing and kneeling, firing with revolvers at a target which slowly moved along the distant wall by means of a tackle of ropes and pulleys. This target was composed of an old policeman's tunic and cap, stuffed with straw; the face was a white cloth, on which eyes, nose, and mouth had been fantastically painted. It appeared childish enough, but I soon saw that the revolver practice was no joke. Hardly a shot was fired which did not cause the effigy to swing and jump. What made this scene more significant was that on the blue tunic the heart, lungs, and stomach had been drawn in white by one who was skilled in anatomy. Standing beside the marksmen was a slim young fellow, who gave his orders in a harsh nasal voice. It was my first sight of Latouche, whose head I was later to see under the deadly blade of Madame Guillotine. "Lungs," I heard him say—and a shot cracked; "Heart," and another man fired.

"Eh bien!" said the old man beside me, "a pleasant sport, is it not? Soon they will practise other pretty ways." After an hour of this pistol practice I saw Latouche sit down and take off his clothes, retaining only a vest, shorts, and his shoes. There was a square lawn in the centre of the garden, and on this Latouche now took up his position. At a call two men came out wearing blue jerseys on which had been chalked the word "Flic" (argot for policeman). They immediately attacked the Apache and attempted to throw him down. Instead, they were themselves tripped and hurled to the ground; in an instant both were gasping and helpless, and I was astounded to see that Latouche was a master of jiu-jitsu. I did not then know of his sojourn in the East. For another hour he demonstrated grips, parries, and counter-attacks to the men surrounding him. Even then I noted how tireless Latouche was.

Following upon the wrestling lesson there came a series of significant scenes during which one man played the part of an inoffensive pedestrian, and was waylaid and robbed of various objects such as his watch, pocket-book, and money. I knew of that deadly attack of the "père François," so called because he invented it, but I had never seen it so callously demonstrated. Whilst the fellow who played the victim walked slowly about the garden a man came up and entered into conversation with him. Another approached noiselessly from behind and threw a scarf over his head, instantly whirling and pulling it with his two hands over his left shoulder, so that the other was lifted from the ground and remained hanging by the scarf around his neck. Then, when he was thus helpless and strangling, the confederate calmly went through his pockets. I had seen enough, and, thanking my guide, who appeared sincerely horrified at this cynical exhibition, I returned to make my report to my Chief.

At first he was inclined to treat the matter as a joke, then he called in M. Colbert, one of his most trusted inspectors.

To him he related what I had seen. To my satisfaction Colbert did not laugh, as I had expected he would; on the contrary, he took a serious view of the whole proceedings. After walking up and down the room for some minutes puffing at his pipe, which even in the presence of his superiors was always between his lips, although not alight, he asked for permission to go and find out what was known about the house in Romainville. Half an hour elapsed before he returned with several documents. These he gave to M. Dufresne, saying:—

"Until now nothing very serious has been reported about these Anarchists. Their leader was that crazy fellow Libertad, who was killed in a street fight. Since his death a man named Lorulot is editing the rag called *L'Anarchie*. They preach and rave against capitalists and read Tolstoi and Ibsen. Every Monday they have what they call a 'causerie'—a kind of open meeting when the platform can be taken by anyone. No serious crime has been committed by any of those who live in that house, but they have all been to prison more or less, for small offences."

Turning to me he added: "To-day is Monday. If M. Dufresne wishes we can go to the meeting to-night and see who is there." To this M. Dufresne agreed.

Mr. H. Ashton-Wolfe disguised as an Apache.

AT eight o'clock we arrived at the house. Around the entrance we saw a strange mixture of workmen, *employés*, and ruffians. We had taken the precaution of dressing ourselves in rough clothes, for we did not wish to attract attention. The meeting was the usual kind of thing, and we began to think that we had wasted our time, when suddenly there was a commotion, and the man I had seen in the afternoon—Latouche—stepped on to the little platform of rough boards. A murmur of approval swept round the room as he began talking. His voice was harsh and unpleasant. In short, biting sentences Latouche jeered at the various speakers who had preceded him.

"Whilst you talk of reforming the community," he concluded, "the capitalists and slave-drivers are laughing at you. You fools—it is not with fine words and theories that you can fight them, but with deeds. War—war with knife and pistol, that is the solution. Dynamite and pestilence they will fear and understand, but never our plea for fair treatment and justice. As they train their hired assassins the police to fight us, so must we unite and train ourselves. Already we have begun. Soon they shall be taught that we have the right to live as well as they," and the speaker drew and brandished a pistol. For a moment the listeners remained motionless, so unexpected had been the outburst. Then all were on their feet talking excitedly. The more peaceful at once withdrew, but a dozen villainous-looking men surrounded Latouche, clapping him on the back and shouting encouragement. We had heard enough for our purpose and left also. When we were outside I told Colbert that the last speaker was the man whom I had seen in the garden.

"Yes, I thought as much," said my colleague. "I will look up the records to-night, and see what is known about him. We must act at once. The place shall be closed. A madman like that can cause immense harm."

THE next day Colbert came to me and said:—

"The man who spoke so violently last night is not Lorulot, for he is at present on a holiday at the expense of the State. This fellow seems to have taken charge of the Anarchist colony at Romainville during his absence. M. Dufresne has decided not to raid the place, nor to arrest anyone yet, for he thinks that by waiting we may make a large haul. There are probably some dangerous criminals hiding in that house. The fellow we saw resembles an

escaped convict called René Latouche, who has been wanted for several years, but until now we had no idea where he was hiding. You are not known to them, so perhaps you will go along and try to get into conversation with him. Here is the *fiche* (photographs and finger-prints) of Latouche. I have posted several men within call, and I shall be driving up and down in an old cab with the Brigadier Rousseau on the box."

I grinned—Rousseau had no need of any disguise as a cabman. A true child of the Paris slums, he had attained a trusted position in the Sûreté by a dogged perseverance and more than a leavening of good luck. Bertillon once said to me :—

"Rousseau knows every Apache in Paris; he drinks with them and is one of them—and so they talk, whereas when we come along they are dumb."

We called him the Brigadier because he would have looked better in the uniform of one of Napoleon's veterans than in the frock-coat he always affected. Twinkling blue eyes, a red nose—due, I am sorry to say, to a fine taste in old wines—and a fierce, drooping moustache, which covered a good-natured mouth: those were the chief features of the old fellow.

During the day I strolled along to the Rue de la Barre dressed as a mechanic. I had a patch over one eye and my left hand was bound up as though I had met with an accident. The "bistro" at the little *café* opposite the house which we visited the night before was quite friendly, but could tell me little except that, since Lorulot had gone, a number of men, never seen before, came daily to the house. It was a difficult matter to gain admission there without arousing suspicion, and for a day I could do nothing but watch from the *café*. Finally I decided to leave foolish disguises aside and go the next morning openly as a reporter. This I did, only to discover that something had frightened them away the day before, and that they had all gone and taken their belongings with them. This we found was true, for, following upon my report, Colbert and several of his men entered and searched the place. The modern Fagin and his pupils were no longer there. The description we managed to obtain from people who had seen the leader confirmed our belief that he was the escaped convict Latouche. A watch was kept upon all the likely haunts, of course, but he was not seen in any of them.

Bel-Ami, the leader of a rival gang, who fought a duel with knives with Latouche.

Tattooing is much in favour with the Apache, who thus satisfies a craving for beauty!

YET soon we heard strange tales of the fellow's activities. A well-known Apache was carried to the Lariboisière hospital one night, severely wounded. The fellow was nicknamed Bel-Ami; because, like his namesake in the famous book by Maupassant, he was the adored of all the women of the Faubourgs. He related that Latouche and he had fought a duel with knives. His sweetheart had left him because Latouche was a better dancer than he, and had taken up her abode with his rival. They had gone to a lonely spot on the fortifications and, stripped to the waist, had fought for possession of the girl. Latouche had gained an easy victory because he had changed his knife from the right to the left hand, and Bel-Ami was unable to parry the upward thrust from that side.

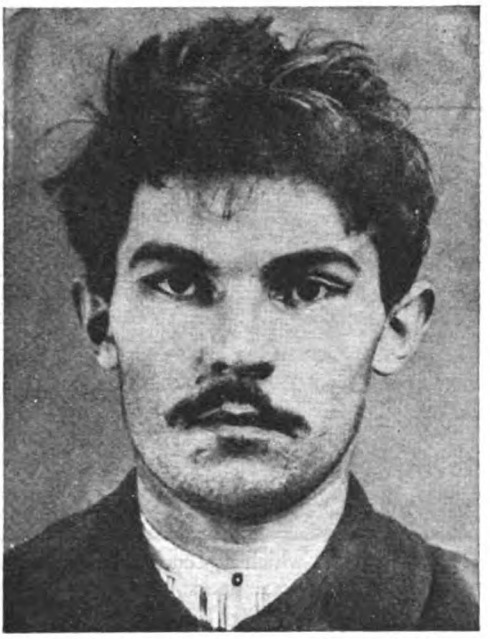
"But I will get him yet," the wounded man snarled, grinning with rage, "as soon as this little cut has healed. I know where he has his secret retreat." Pressed to say where this was, he refused to answer.

A few days after this characteristic episode, Colbert and I were prowling about "La Villette" when we heard a cry for help. Running to the spot from where the call had come, we found a man lying on the ground with a silk handkerchief twisted round his neck. Although we carried him at once to a chemist and applied artificial respiration, he died without regaining consciousness.

The man thus killed only a short distance from busy, teeming streets was a prosperous wholesale provision dealer named Jacques Dubois. Our inquiry brought to light the fact that he had lately dined several times in the company of a tall, handsome girl in whom we recognized that new acquisition of Latouche, the former sweetheart of Bel-Ami. Obviously the Apache was using her as a decoy. What surprised and angered us was the

ease with which he and his gang disappeared.

Although it was not really my work, I spent the week with Rousseau and Colbert, searching every likely *café* and shady dance hall. It was late one night when, near the Seine embankment, I saw a group of Salvation Army men and women going their usual rounds. They were pushing a handcart, on which was a huge cauldron of steaming soup, which they were in the habit of distributing every night. It is rare, even in the Paris slums, that these devoted, unselfish people meet with rudeness. As I approached I saw, however, that a crowd of hooligans were making sport of them. Suddenly a lithe form bounded from a doorway. Like a storm he burst upon the startled roughs. Using feet and hands, the latter probably armed with knuckle-dusters, this queer knight-errant made such fearful havoc of his adversaries that they fled without attempting to retaliate. Then I saw him sweep off his cap in an exaggerated bow to the frightened soup-distributors. As he did so the light from a street lamp fell on his face—it was Latouche! It went against the grain to take advantage of his singular bravery, so I waited until the little band of blue-clad men and lassies had continued on their errand of mercy before going up to him. He was leaning against the low parapet, rolling a cigarette, when I approached. Pulling a Maryland from my pocket, I asked him for a light. It was then for the first time that I felt the horror of his filmy eyes. I saw that he was looking fixedly at my hand as I lit my cigarette from his match. When it was glowing, he smiled an evil smile and said, pointing to my dress: "Are you working?"



Latouche the Apache—a photograph taken after his arrest.

I shook my head.

"No—been out of work for some time."

"Well, White Hands, I advise you to remain out of work," and he laughed harshly.

I felt myself grow red with humiliation. I had forgotten to dirty my nails. "Ah, bah," I retorted, "*les gonzesses* don't like dirty hands, and women are better than work any day."

For a moment he did not reply, then he said, meaningly:—

"Better not try to dirty them, then."

I could see that the fellow was watching my every movement, and I guessed that he was well armed; still, I could not let him go, for I remembered all the men this strange being had killed, or caused to be killed. Abruptly he turned as if to walk away and I pulled out my whistle. Before it reached my lips, a huge black paw flashed over my shoulder, and it was wrenched away. At the same instant I was picked up as though I weighed nothing and flung over the low wall into the swirling river. I had a fleeting impression of a face like that of a gorilla peering after me; then I had to struggle against the swift current.

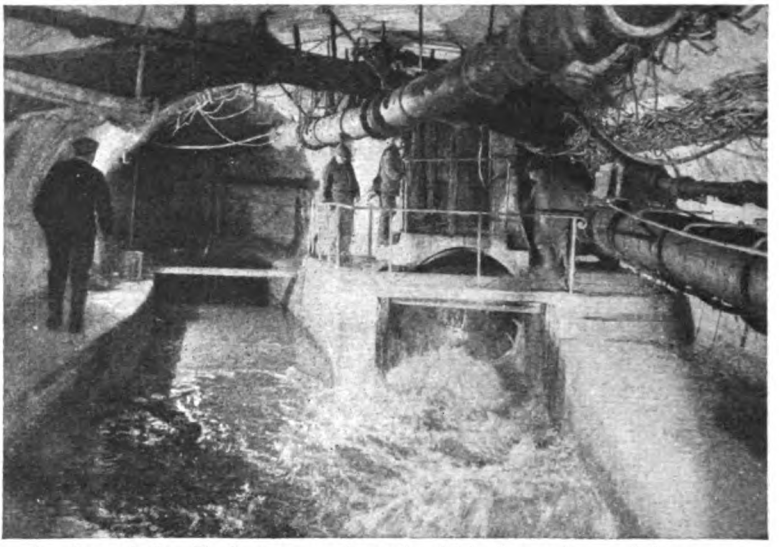
When I rejoined Colbert, dripping wet and sick with rage at my fiasco, I could only relate how easily I had been rendered helpless. Colbert was grave and sympathetic.

"You are lucky to be alive," he said. "I have heard of the negro who threw you into the river. He is called Cric-Crac, because he can break a man's back just like that—cric-crac." I shuddered.

"He is from the Senegal," my friend continued, "and was one of the most bloodthirsty members of the band of which Bel-Ami was leader. I can understand your 'sporting instinct' in not covering and taking the bandit when he was protecting those Salvation Army people—but it was a chance which will not come again."

THE meeting with me had apparently put the Apache on his guard, for now we sought him in vain.

Then came the startling news that the pretty heiress and society girl, Enid Hardy, had mysteriously disappeared. She was a French-Canadian, whose father had been a rich lumberman and who had left his wealth to his charming daughter. Obedient to the call of her French blood, for the mother had



A view of the Paris sewers, through which Latouche and his gang were chased for several hours.

originally come from Normandy, Enid Hardy had settled down in Paris, where for a season she had dazzled society by her sumptuous receptions. The thirst for excitement had led her to frequent the Latin quarter and Bohemian Montmartre, where she often danced in the various "bals" with doubtful partners.

Then one night she had not returned home. The investigation brought to light the astounding fact that, while the Sûreté had been searching for him in low Apache haunts, Latouche—thanks to his early education—had been spending his time, fashionably-dressed, dancing the then popular tango in expensive Montmartre restaurants, at the Tabarin and other pleasure resorts. Enid Hardy had evidently fallen in love with the bandit, for on the day she was last seen she had drawn a large sum from the bank and, after supping in his company at the Abbaye Thélème, had danced half the night with him. Since then neither had been seen. It was feared that the girl had been murdered and robbed of her jewels and money. Yet again we could obtain no clue to the hiding-place of the Apache and his gang. Then it was I remembered the "Caveau de Bibi."

Dr. Bertillon had long decided that the place should be raided, and to him I went and explained my idea. I believed that since Latouche was not to be found in any of the usual *cafés* and thieves' dens, yet was still in Paris, it was because he had discovered an underground retreat. There had been a long series of crimes committed lately which pointed to unwonted activity among the footpads of the great city. Bank messengers had been waylaid and either killed or wounded, several had completely disappeared, leaving no trace. The cellar tavern called the "Caveau" communicated with the vast sewers, and it was quite possible that the men we had seen practising their criminal methods in Romainville had found the underground galleries, with their exits in many streets, the ideal stronghold.

"But there is something more than just this theory which makes you think of the Caveau de Bibi," Dr. Bertillon said when I had finished my explanation.

"Yes, there is," I replied. "The Crédit Foncier informed the Sûreté this morning that one of their *employés*, who had been sent to collect various drafts, has not returned. He was last seen in the Rue de Lappe near the Bastille—and had then only three more people to call upon. One of these is an Italian named Collodi, who has an underground mushroom farm."

My Chief nodded.

"I see. Well, I will speak to M. Dufresne. I will let you know later what he decides."

The outcome of my interview was that Colbert, Rousseau, and myself were ordered to investigate the matter. While Rousseau went with a strong force of police to the infamous cellar tavern, Colbert and I went to the house of the Italian Collodi. It had been agreed that, after placing our men to guard the upper exits, we should enter the place at the stroke of seven, so that if the two places communicated underground, as I believed, we should catch whoever attempted to escape either way.

No answer was obtained to our knocking, so without more ado we forced the door and entered. The place was deserted. In the extensive underground vault where the mushroom beds were, we found traces of recent occupation. The huge iron ovens, which are used to maintain an even temperature in these places, were glowing redly and had been filled to the brim with coke.

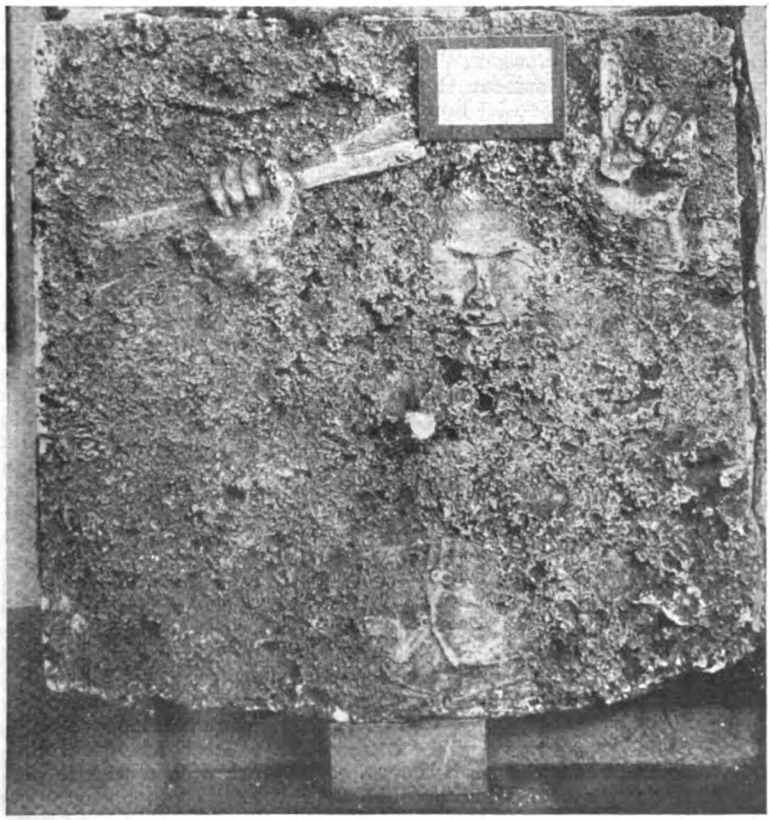
Although we searched the house and the cellar carefully we found nothing, and Colbert began to think that we were on a false scent. We were about to go when the dog we had taken with us began scratching frantically in one corner of the mushroom vault, whining eagerly. Stooping over the hole he had made we saw several shining pieces of metal. They proved to be the remains of a steel lock and chain and a buckle, which had been exposed to intense heat, and, although they were partly fused, we still saw on them the monogram of the well-known bank.

"These belonged to the unfortunate messenger," said Colbert, "and it is probable that the body has been burned in those ovens. But many others whose remains were never found and whose fate was evidently similar were not killed in this neighbourhood. How were they brought here?"

"Underground," I replied. "We must search. Perhaps the dog can find what we cannot."

But, although we sounded the walls and explored every inch of the ground, all our efforts were in vain. Finally, Colbert and I elected to stay in the vault and watch. The men immediately filed out, and when the noise of their footsteps had died away we settled down, each in a corner, where the glow from the ovens did not reach us. Several hours passed thus in complete silence, until I felt myself gradually falling asleep. I was about to stand up when a harsh laugh sounded from a few yards away. At the same moment one of the ovens moved with a grating sound to one side and a head and shoulders emerged from a black opening in the ground. Small wonder that neither we nor the dog had discovered it, for the heat of the glowing coke had kept us at a distance.

With pistol ready we waited for the man to crawl out. I had recognized him instantly. It was the bandit Latouche. Carefully he looked around, then suddenly he ducked down again and we heard his voice calling to someone. Before we could move the rays of an acetylene lamp illuminated the whole vault brilliantly. Knowing that we were discovered we made a rush for the hole in the ground. Instantly the lamp disappeared and we heard running feet. Colbert was about to switch on his pocket torch, when I seized his arm and pulled him back. Taking off my cap I placed it on the end of a piece of wood and pushed it slowly over the edge, throwing the rays of my lamp down the opening. Four shots spat out from below and the cap was torn from the stick.



A triumph of modern criminal investigation. A plaster cast of the impression in the dust of one of Latouche's gang, who fell flat on his face whilst running to escape from the police. In his right hand is a jemmy, in his left a heavy automatic. He was traced, captured, and identified by his waistcoat and the buttons seen in the photograph.

For a moment we did not know what to do—the Apache and probably some of his companions were waiting for us. Then the sight of the ovens gave us an idea. There were several large shovels lying about. We filled one of them with glowing coke and suddenly emptied it down the opening. A roar of pain and anger followed and a string of vile curses told us that they had fallen on an upturned face. Without giving the men below time to recover from their surprise, we threw ourselves flat on the edge and switched on our lamps. Below us was a wide tunnel built of square stones. An iron ladder led down to the ground some ten feet away, and on the stones with which it was paved a man was writhing in pain. Forgetting that it might be a ruse, we clambered down the ladder. He had been badly burned on the face and neck by our sudden attack, but the large automatic pistol still beside him told us that our pity was wasted. We handcuffed him and dragged him up into the vault, just as several shots were fired at us from a distance. As we regained the mushroom cellar we heard a shower of blows on the door above and the voice of Rousseau shouting. Colbert rushed upstairs to let him in, and in a few moments he came back, followed by the old Brigadier and four Sûreté officers. Rousseau was very angry.

"A fine chase we have had, *nom de nom*," he growled. "One of my men killed and two still lying wounded in the Caveau, and all for nothing. Just the usual gang of ruffians were down there, but no sign of Latouche, nor of our friend Bibi the Terror. We caught several—but those sewers are a death trap. What have you done?"

I pointed to the man we had captured, who was groaning and praying for relief.

"Bien," said Rousseau, "we will send for an ambulance." Then, looking around him and at the hole in the ground, he asked what we had discovered. We told him that we had been about to explore when he arrived. As soon as the injured man had been taken away, we all crept down the ladder again. Holding our electric torches away from our bodies, we slowly examined the stone-paved tunnel.

"This is not part of the sewers," said Colbert. "Where the devil are we?"

SUDDENLY Rousseau gave a cry and flashed his lamp towards a number of long, narrow recesses, almost like sleeping berths, built into the wall. We started back in horror—in each one was a human skeleton, yellow with age, a dry parchment skin still adhering to the skulls.

"The catacombs!" burst from Colbert. "We are in the catacombs of Paris, where centuries ago the monks placed their dead. What a hiding-place! En avant—we must find out how far this gallery goes. No wonder we have been unable to find Latouche and his gang!"

Silently we crept forward. The tunnel we were in commenced at the iron ladder, which had obviously been placed there recently. On every side were gruesome vestiges of death and decay. Once my lamp shone on a rough cross hewn in the stone with an inscription in Latin under it. After about two hundred yards in a straight line we came to a round space that had evidently once served as a hall of assembly. Here we found traces of the Apaches. Several tables had been carried to this spot. On them were still an array of bottles and dishes, looking weirdly out of place in that ancient hall of religious fervour. Mattresses were ranged along one side and blankets and clothes strewed the floor. A curtain had been hung before a deep recess, and behind it we found a camp bed and dainty clothes which had belonged to a woman of taste and wealth. A leather bag with silver fittings was lying overturned on the bed; on one side of it were the initials E. H.

"That belonged to the little girl from Canada," said Rousseau; "she was either kept a prisoner here or she followed the Apache leader of her own free will. The latter, I should think."

"Why?" asked Colbert. "Surely a girl like that would not stay here willingly?"

Rousseau pointed to the curtain. "They would not have put that up if she had been a prisoner—our sweet criminals are not so attentive to a captive woman."

Several galleries radiated from the hall, and after examining the marks in the dust we decided to separate and follow two of them. Rousseau and two men crept with me along one passage and Colbert went down the other with the remaining two men. The tunnel we had chosen was narrow, with burial niches on each side. The light from our electric torches cast dancing shadows of weird unearthly shape on these recesses—many of which were filled with bones and grinning skulls. Others appeared to have dark moving forms with gleaming eyes in their depths. A shrill piping revealed their nature—they were rats. Suddenly, as we neared a spot where the passage widened, sinister faces peered at us from a break in the wall, a whistle shrilled somewhere, and at the signal several men leaped out, gleaming knives in their hands. A pistol cracked behind us and the torch Rousseau held was smashed to splinters. We were beset on all sides.

What followed was a nightmare. In the dark the flashes from our pistols were

blinding in their intensity, and the reports, magnified a hundredfold in that narrow space, split our ears and made us dizzy. Back to back we fought savagely. Fortunately neither the men behind nor those in front dared to use firearms, for fear of shooting each other, or we should have been massacred; even as it was we were in desperate straits and should have been overcome in a few minutes if Colbert and his men had not arrived. Now the attackers were in their turn taken by surprise, and those between Colbert and ourselves at once surrendered.

Leaving him to deal with them, we ran after the men who had appeared before us. Rousseau was wounded in one arm and I had a cut in the neck, but no one was seriously hurt. Guided by the noise of running feet we raced along several galleries. Suddenly a wall rose before us, and, turning quickly, we were just in time to see someone watching us from a hole on one side. Rousseau fired and the face disappeared. By the light of our lamps we saw that on the other side of the opening there was running water; we had reached the sewers! We climbed cautiously through the opening and saw several moving shapes in the distance. The chase continued through sewer after sewer for several hours, the fleeing shapes ever before us. We could only advance in single file, yet we were determined to capture the men who had attacked us.

However, we had to abandon the pursuit at last, for the wound in Rousseau's arm was becoming very painful. Instead of going back the way we had come we searched for and were fortunate enough to find one of the iron ladders leading to the street. Dragging and pushing the old Brigadier between us, we managed to climb this and so gained the open air. To our surprise we found ourselves on the outskirts of Paris. Tired, dirty, and footsore, with wounds and cuts throbbing painfully, we dragged ourselves along, supporting Rousseau, who was now in a bad way, until we found a "poste de police." A car from the Sûreté was sent for us in reply to our telephone call. It was dawn when I arrived home.

IN all seven men had been captured. For some days they refused stubbornly to give any information, but at last one of them gave way under the persistent questions of the juge d'instruction and told him that Latouche had disposed of nearly thirty men. All the bodies of those who had been murdered had been brought through the underground passages to the mushroom cellar and burned there. He declared that he had only helped to sell the stolen jewellery, bank drafts, and other ill-gotten spoils. Pressed to indicate the hiding-place of the leader, he confessed that Latouche had a house outside Paris, from which he could gain the sewers and the catacombs, but where it was he did not know. The man who had been burned was still in hospital and could not be interrogated. He was the Italian, Collodi, the owner of the mushroom farm.

Officers were placed in the catacombs and at all the likely exits from the sewers. The Caveau was in the hands of the police, and men were constantly on guard there, too. Of the unfortunate girl, Enid Hardy, we had no news whatever. Crowds surrounded the house of the Italian, morbidly curious to see the place where so many victims had been incinerated.

"The horror of the Champignonnière," the *Matin* called it. Objects were discovered that had belonged to several well-known men and women, whose mysterious disappearance had been a nine days' wonder; and soon the very name of Latouche made people shudder and look fearfully around.

The Sûreté worked feverishly day and night and many more of his accomplices were captured, but the leader and his lieutenant, the gigantic negro, Cric-Crac, were still at large. But where the police failed, hatred and jealousy succeeded. We had almost forgotten Bel-Ami, who had quite recovered from the wound inflicted by Latouche, and was shut in a room by himself pending his removal to prison. One night he managed to escape from the hospital and disappeared, but not for long. Just before dawn terrible cries were heard proceeding from a lonely house at Bicetre, a northern suburb of Paris.

The police at once surrounded the house, and in answer to an urgent telephone message informing us that Latouche and the negro had fired at the police from a window, we raced there in a powerful car. Dr. Bertillon and M. Dufresne quickly joined us, and a squad of motor-cycle police followed. A cordon was formed round the house, in which a desperate fight was taking place. Just as we arrived, an explosion blew out several windows and a body was hurled from a broken casement. It was Bel-Ami, terribly mangled and bleeding from a dozen wounds. He died as we lifted him. The police were about to smash in the stout door with a wooden beam when a series of fearful screams turned our blood cold; the door opened and a girl staggered forward blindly; her face and neck dreadfully burned by vitriol. Colbert at once drove her to the nearest hospital in the Sûreté ambulance.

MEANWHILE, the police had rushed into the house. A frantic search for the Apache revealed the fact that he had again escaped, but on a bed in a back room we found the poor girl, Enid Hardy, bound and gagged. She was also bleeding from a deep knife-wound, and died before she could be removed. A broken and incoherent statement obtained from her told us only what we already knew, that for a time the unhappy girl had foolishly thought to find romance and excitement in the company of the Apache. Too late she had realized what a monster he was, and when she tried to run away he had chained her up in the attic. For weeks she had been kept in the room where we found her.

Then that evening, while Latouche, the negro, and a girl called Jeanne l'Espanole were eating, a man—Bel-Ami—had entered the room through the window and had attacked them. From where she lay she saw the whole dreadful scene. Taken by surprise, the negro had received a stab in the neck. Then Latouche sprang at the intruder and a fierce struggle had ensued which lasted a long time. At last Latouche had tripped and fallen. Thereupon the other man pulled a small jar from his pocket and was about to throw it at Latouche when the girl Jeanne had rushed between them. With a howl of rage the man had yelled, " Take it, then, if you want it," and hurled the jar, which contained vitriol, at her head. At that moment the negro had succeeded in rising, and lifting the man above his head threw him at the closed window. A terrible explosion followed. She heard the girl stumble downstairs, shrieking dreadfully. Then Latouche and the negro had dashed through the room, and, in passing, Latouche had driven a knife into her, shouting, " You're better dead ! "

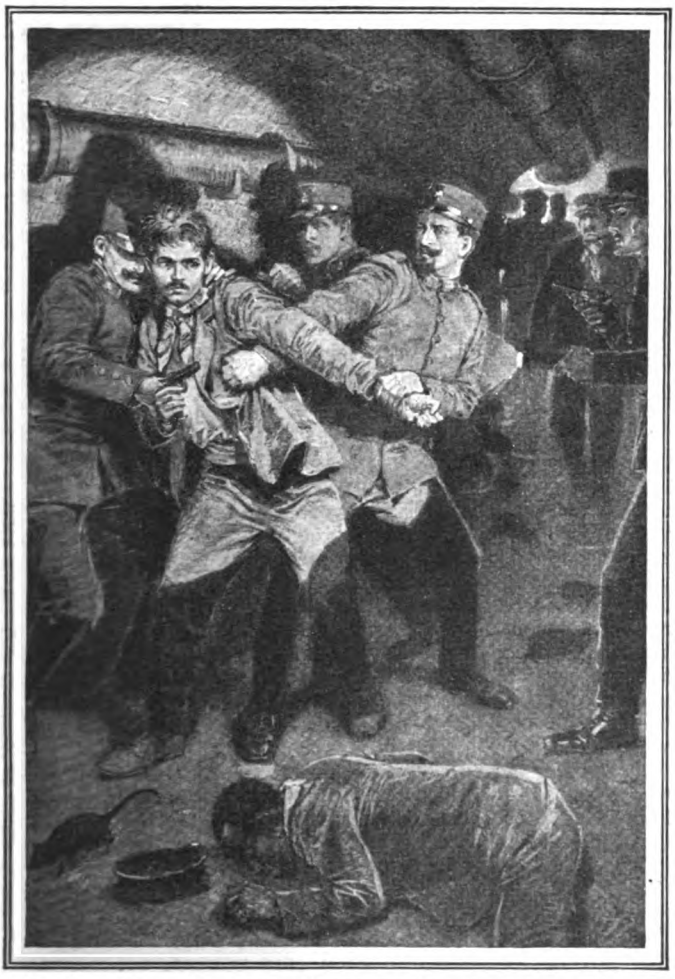
Too late we attempted to question her as to how the Apache escaped ; the poor girl had already lost consciousness and died in a few moments. After her body had been removed, Dr. Bertillon carefully examined the house and grounds, together with Colbert and myself. In the cellar we found splashes of blood which led to a corner, where we discovered a loose stone slab ; under this was another underground passage. Several Sûreté officers were summoned at once, and we clambered down. We found ourselves in some old abandoned galleries which had served as sewers in former years. They were swarming with thousands of huge rats, and we had literally to fight our way through them. So ravenous and savage were they that several of our men were cruelly bitten. They surrounded and attacked us the moment we ceased to shout and stamp ; running over our feet and dropping on us from above. Long before we reached a larger tunnel leading from the one we had entered, we were sick and ill with loathing and horror. Several times we stumbled against white and shining skeletons ; then abruptly from ahead we heard shouting and the reverberation of several shots. A struggle was going on at a bend in the tunnel, which ended as we arrived. In the midst of a group of police officers was Latouche—taken at last. On the ground, dead, shot through the heart, was the negro.

THE bandits remained in prison for over a year pending their trial ; for the crimes they had committed were so numerous that three investigating judges were kept busy during that time. When they were finally brought before the court, presided over by the great criminal judge, M. Mangin, the proceedings were constantly interrupted by violent manifestations and cries of " Why waste time ? Throw them to us to deal with ! "

An imposing force of municipal guards and cycle police had to clear all the streets leading to the Palace of Justice on the last day, and no one but the Press was allowed inside the court. Pale and shaking, seven of the bandits heard the sentence of death pronounced. The others were sent to penal servitude for life.

ONE cold, bleak day in October, 1912, I watched the dread instrument of justice arrive in two closed vans at the Boulevard Arrago. Rough, sturdy men unloaded strangely-shaped parts, pregnant with the coming tragedy. Slowly under their skilled hands rose a gaunt, dread shape, which has often haunted me in my dreams. Two upright posts loomed darkly against the sky ; under the crosspiece hung a broad, triangular blade weighted with mercury. Its keen edge was covered with a leather sheath to protect it from the drizzling rain. Below it was the " lunette," a piece of wood with a hole in the centre such as we see in pictures of the stocks, and divided in the middle. Under this was the " bascule," the board against which the criminal is strapped in an upright position and which then falls, bringing his head beneath the knife.

Like wildfire the news at once spread that Latouche was to die the following morning, and the mounted dragoons and Republican guards had to use their sticks to keep the crowds back. Many weeks ago all the windows overlooking the square had been let for large sums to relatives of the victims of the bandits. The hammers of the workmen were muffled, but the murmur from the dense mass of people, growing ever larger as



In the midst of a group of police officers was Latouche—taken at last.

the night wore on, rose and swelled like the roar of an approaching storm. Just before dawn I saw Deibler, the executioner, arrive, wrapped in a great-coat. Slowly and carefully he examined and tested every part of the grisly machine by the light of a lantern. Then at his order a dummy was fetched. With a dull thud the " bascule " fell, the top half of the " lunette " slid down, and with a hiss the knife dropped, shearing through the thick cloth stuffed with wool. Twice again this was done ; then the blade rose into its position with a click of finality.

All was ready for the last act. A hush of expectancy passed over the waiting crowd. Somewhere a woman laughed shrilly, hysterically. The dawn was near—cold and grey. Although I knew how many poor innocent men and women the monster had done to death, I could not repress a shiver. There was something so dreadful about the methodical, deliberate preparations. A hand grasped my arm and, turning, I perceived my friend Colbert standing beside me, his teeth chattering audibly.

Suddenly I beheld a group of men approaching quickly. In their midst, held firmly by two powerful assistant executioners, was Latouche, in shirt and trousers. His hands were strapped behind his back, and his shirt had been cut widely away from the neck. He looked small and frail, and as he passed by me I saw beads of agony glisten on his brow. My eyes were fixed on his neck—I could not tear them away. I saw him recoil as he reached the base of the guillotine, then he looked up at the knife and around him at the motionless soldiers. His shoulders went back with a gesture of disdain and his harsh voice pealed out in a yell of defiance, " Vive l'Anarchie ! "

The two men who grasped his arms forced him up the three steps leading to the scaffold. There he was seized—a click—a thud—a raucous cry of mortal fear, and Latouche had paid his debt. How his men died I do not know, for I hurried away from the dreadful place as quickly as I could I had seen enough.

*(**Next month :** " The Suicide Room "—one of the most amazing cases in the annals of crime.)*

"Hobnailed Mirth"

by

ROLAND PERTWEE

Illustrated by
TREYER EVANS

THE popular suburban settlement of Haywards Cross was more remarkable for the amiability of its residents than for their intellectual attainments. Haywards Cross provided scenery of the kind illustrated in poster pictures of Dairy Produce, modern Tudor houses with half-acre gardens, some capital hard courts, two golf courses, laid out by Braid and played over with approval by Hagen, and a first-class railway service.

Haywards Cross appealed to that class of successful business man who was not tired—or, at any rate, not too tired to indulge, at the close of a day's work, in a spell of violent exercise.

Because a health-giving air and plenty of exercise make men hearty, it was the custom when a Haywards Cross man met a man from Haywards Cross that jokes should be cracked.

To the hypersensitive the cracking of jokes may appear the least agreeable method of presenting them—this being based on the theory that anything cracked is unserviceable—but it is a method in force at many places with first-class railway services.

Now it has been wisely ruled that humour to shine at its best should depend upon elements of fancy rather than of practice, the practical joke being condemned as the sport of the half-wit and the resort of blunted intelligences.

But this fact notwithstanding, the Haywardians did not encourage subtlety. Sometimes, from over-enthusiasm, they erred on a point of good taste, when there would arise a coldness between The Gables and The Pines, and wives would pass each other in the High Street with unnoticing eyes, and husbands in railway carriages would betray greater interest in the leading articles of picture papers than the substance would appear to command. But these little frigidities in the fullness of time or tennis were swiftly melted in perspiration, when, barring an extra gin and bitters, taken in friendship, all would be as before.

George and Nell Forrester, possibly on account of the deep affection they bore for each other, did not at once assume the manner of Haywards Cross. Unused to extensive democracies, they came to it gradually.

Before coming to live in the country they had had a little house in Kensington, where, with the exception of Kenneth Farrell, who was almost one of the family, they were sufficient unto themselves.

Kenneth was a necessity. He thought George and Nell were marvellous and did not conceal his admiration. He was their dog. Because this was so, in the nicest possible way, Nell and George bullied Kenneth for his eternal good. George advised him in matters of business policy, and Nell, to whom he came for counsel in affairs of the heart, was unfailing in her patience as a listener and for the sagacity of her judgments.

Kenneth, who both in appearance and address was a most engaging young man, had an infallible gift for falling in love. His susceptibility was a byword. His soul was of a tinder that flared at the veriest spark. Affairs hopeless and dangerously hopeful were his especial province. It was Nell's pleasurable duty to rescue him from the continual error of his emotions. As each new enthusiasm, fanned by the winds of confidence, blazed up in him, Nell with cool words and wisdom pointed out the mistaken nature of his choice.

"I know, Ken. I *do* know, and now—now I'm sure it's wonderful—but, dear, would it last?"

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Kenneth, like a young ash blown this way and that, tossed his head, tugged at a lock of hair, blinked his sea-blue eyes, and forced a smile.

"Heaven knows! I don't. But what does last in that way?"

"Ken!" The tone was reproving.

"Yes, you and old George, I know, but precious few others. And, anyway, one has to take a risk."

"One must be sure," said Nell.

"But how is one to know one's sure? I thought I was sure until you said I wasn't."

"That's it, you see. You aren't sure, or nothing anyone said would make a difference." She held out a hand. "Bless you, old man, go home and think it over—sensibly. You don't know what George and I would feel if—if anything went wrong."

Kenneth nodded gloomily.

"It's a strange thing," he said, "that you, five years younger than I am, should be so right about everything."

Then George, all friendship, tact, and rough good humour:—

"Well, you two, got it out of the system?"

A hand-grip for Kenneth and a hug for Nell.

"She's a fine counsellor. What about a small one before dinner?"

It will be seen that Nell and George treated their dog with great consideration.

In all England there was not a happier trio, for, although opinions to the contrary may be championed by a few, it will be generally agreed that married couples are most united when there is a third person at hand to act as a flux between them—to bridge little differences that may arise—and provide material for discussion in absence. Kenneth, Nell, and George were the complements of each other, and the old days in Kensington were of a happiness to be remembered.

Then came George's financial rise and the consequent purchase of "Haddon," Weald Way, Haywards Cross.

Kenneth was made a permanent week-end visitor, with a room to be considered "his really own," and various other advantages of a privileged person.

Of course it was totally different from Kensington, as how should it be otherwise with the pores of the skin in such constant action? Organized games and gaieties were always on the stocks, and there were so many jolly things to do, and folks to see, that time to think simply did not exist.

To Kenneth it made a great change, and one he was slow to appreciate. By nature a dreamer, a solitary, a romanticist, he was disposed to resent the hearty, healthy familiarity of Haywards Cross. He did not approve of the possessive manner in which the neighbourhood had absorbed his two friends. He did not like these slender acquaintances calling Nell by her Christian name on first meeting, and back-slapping George as though he were a public punching ball. It offended his sense of the proprieties, and more than once his temper got the better of him, to the embarrassment of Nell and the amusement of George.

Then one afternoon he was downright rude to Jack Bartlett, who, by virtue of the fact that he drove the longest ball of any man at

"Go home and think it over—sensibly," she said.

Haywards Cross G.C., was not a person to be treated lightly.

Jack Bartlett was too much of a celebrity to care a snap of the fingers for the criticisms from such a little "pip" as Kenneth Farrell. He passed the whole thing off with a laugh. A good laugh, too. Having half sawn through the under side of a plank bridge that spanned a sheet of water in his garden, he invited Kenneth to a private chat behind the rhododendrons and stood aside for him to cross the bridge. Kenneth stalked over like a duellist and fell in like a log.

The Smithsons, the Bentleys, and young Harry Caber, who were in the joke, roared approval. George laughed a bit and even Nell smiled—if a shade doubtfully. Kenneth, white-lipped, dragged himself out through the mud and clinging weed. Walking up to Jack Bartlett, he struck at his face with an open hand. But Jack Bartlett did not wait for the hand to reach its mark. He demonstrated some very pretty ducking and dodging, to the delight of the onlookers, finishing up by hiding behind Nell's skirts with mock cries for mercy.

The blither spirits suggested that Kenneth should be hung on the line to dry his clothes and cool his temper, but George put a stop to that.

"Joke's gone far enough," he said, pushing Kenneth into a garden chair which young Caber deftly removed at the exact moment of contact.

It will be seen that here was a light-hearted and gay company, composed of first-class fellows, frolicsome and full of fun.

That evening, while Kenneth was still smouldering, George took him to task.

"A sense of humour was never your strong suit, old man."

"If that's humour," Kenneth began, to be stopped by Nell's :—

"Ken dear, it was only a joke. And to get angry——"

"Look here, surely *you* don't approve ?" he appealed.

"P'r'aps not entirely, but when people all get jolly, it's a pity to take things seriously. Anyone would think you hadn't been to a public school."

"Anyone'd think I was still there," said he. And shut his mouth.

It was his first sign of insurrection.

The silence that followed was only disturbed by the bubbling of George's pipe ; Kenneth with folded arms stared sullenly at the night.

Then Nell did a very womanish thing. She tossed her needlework into a basket, slammed down the lid, and walked straight to the door.

From George came a quick :—

"You're not going to bed, darling ?"

"I am," she answered.

Something in her manner of saying it compelled Kenneth's eyes to seek hers.

"I don't like people who sulk," she said, and went out.

"And that's that," said George.

In that moment it seemed to Kenneth that all he cared for most in the world was slipping away beneath his feet.

"This is rotten—absolutely—George, look here, we're such pals. I can't bear anything——"

In emotion Kenneth became inarticulate.

George went on sucking at his pipe.

ON the half landing Nell repented somewhat. This may have been because she had not believed she would be allowed to proceed as far as the half landing. The precedent following the kind of exit she had made was a swift recall and an immediate apology. But one could never be sure with Ken—he was funny—odd. He ignored the rules of the game. Uncertainty was one of his charms. She didn't blame him for being annoyed because Jack Bartlett and those others had been a trifle heavy-handed. But Kenneth had no right to call George's friends cads, even if they were a wee bit "outsidish." Nell Forrester pouted and tapped her foot ; small indignant thrills pricked and throbbed under her cheeks.

"It's too bad of him to take things seriously," she said, half aloud. "He always *has* fallen in with our ways before, and he has no right to upset things now."

She reflected that Jack Bartlett was justified in having said :—

"Your pal Kenneth wants bucking up."

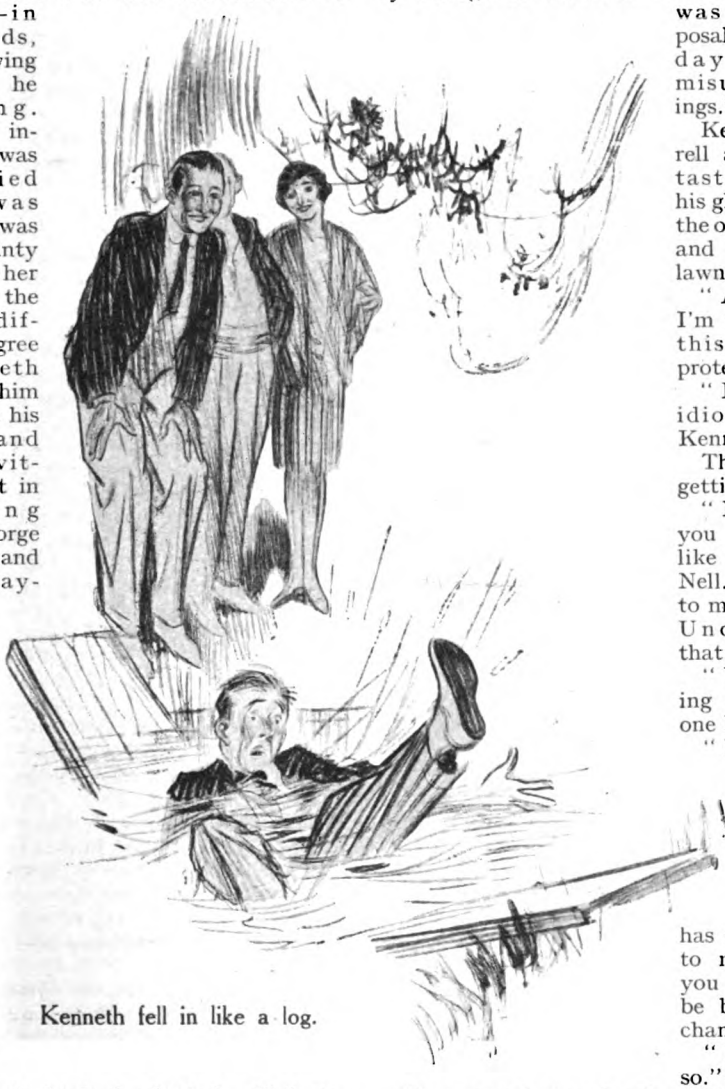
It's an awful thing if a man can't stand being ragged. So middle-aged.

It did not occur to Nell that all this loud-mouthed fun and schoolboy jollity, as conducted by persons who presumably should have arrived at more sober understanding, was in itself a statement of youth left behind. Nell was twenty-nine, George thirty-eight, and Jack Bartlett over forty. Viewed dispassionately, their romping had about it some of the characteristics of those bright patches of colour with which some very old ladies are apt to bedeck their cheek-bones. But Nell was not in a mood for viewing things dispassionately. Her proprietorial senses had been outraged. Kenneth had committed the unpardonable sin of independence. He, who was accustomed to follow, had taken the lead. The dog had bitten its master, which was something not to be endured.

Had Nell Forrester been convinced that the kind of life they were now living and the kind of humour they were now supporting

were really the best, she would not have been offended by Kenneth's hostility. Their friendship had been built upon the moulding of his points of view into the likeness of her own—in other words, upon showing him where he was wrong. But in this instance she was not satisfied that he was wrong. It was this uncertainty that made her position in the affair so difficult. To agree with Kenneth would give him views above his station, and would inevitably result in upsetting George. George was happy and well at Haywards Cross, and that George should be happy and well was of first importance to Nell.

There was only one thing to do, then. Kenneth would have to be brought into line and jollied out of the sticky attitude he had adopted. Nell tiptoed downstairs and listened at the drawing-room door. There were no voices, which could only mean Kenneth was still sulking.



Kenneth fell in like a log.

On a small table by her elbow was a tray with a whisky decanter, a siphon, and glasses. Nell thought for a moment, nodded, picked up the decanter, and stole away with it to the dining-room, where she emptied the whisky into its original bottle and refilled the decanter with vinegar.

Repressing an inclination to snuffle with laughter, she replaced the decanter on the tray and went upstairs, only pausing long enough to put a dried sea-urchin and a couple of hair-brushes in Kenneth's bed.

It was unlucky that with the drink offered by George to Kenneth ten minutes later was the proposal: "Happy days and no misunderstandings."

Kenneth Farrell at the first taste pitched his glass through the open window and across the lawn.

"Anyway, I'm innocent of this," George protested.

"Damned idiocy," from Kenneth.

Then George, getting angry:—

"Look here, you can't talk like that about Nell. At least, to me you can't. Understand that."

"Who's talking about anyone?"

"I'm warning you to go slow."

"So it's come to warning each other, has it? Seems to me, George, you and I 'ud be better for a change."

"If you say so."

They stared at each other. Then Kenneth at the door with a crisp "Good night."

"Damn the fellow," said George, as the door slammed. In his agitation he picked up the vinegar and soda and gulped a mouthful.

Thus it came about that two of the six cut-glass goblets presented by Kenneth in honour of the new home went west in a single evening.

Nell and George lay awake for nearly an hour that night talking things over. The result of the talk was the decision that perhaps they had tried the "old fish"

rather high. They passed a resolution to make it up to him in the morning. After which Nell nuzzled her cheek down in the crook of George's arm and they went to sleep.

But when morning came Kenneth's room was found to be empty. The bedclothes were scattered and a crushed sea-urchin lay upon the floor. There was neither letter nor message, and no one had heard Kenneth get his car out of the garage.

After that it became difficult. Both George and Nell were determined that the first advance should come from Kenneth, and apparently he was of the same mind. The result was an unbroken silence that lasted for three weeks. At the end of that period George came out in his true colours, and casting away pride put pen to paper and wrote :—

My dear old Ken,—
Don't be an ass. Expecting you for the week-end.

GEORGE.

This he showed to Nell, who seemed a little doubtful. But the letter was posted. Four days went by without an answer. On the morning of the fifth, while taking a breath of air before breakfast, George collected his morning mail from the postman. On top of the pile of letters and bills was an envelope bearing Kenneth's characteristic scrawl.

George straddled a gate, broke the seal, and read :—

My dear George,—
I am not staying away because of that silly row, but for a very real cause. As you will certainly have guessed, if not actually have known, I am in love with Nell. I don't think that there is anything more to say, for here is one of those wonderful damn things that can't be helped. So you'll see I am better out of the way. It would be a lie to say I'm sorry, but it is bad luck all the same.

KENNETH.

Under lowered brows George stared at the letter and stared. He felt as though someone had struck him with sickening force over the heart. He thought : They had been such pals—all three. Their friendship would have to be broken. He thought : Poor old Kenneth, he must be suffering like the devil. No wonder he hated all that ragging. Gosh ! why do such infernal things happen ?

RATHER white and shaky, George went indoors and mounted to his wife's bedroom. Her he kissed strangely—unexpectedly ran a hand over her head, and drifted to the window, dropping the letter on her pin tray as he passed.

The sunlight in the garden looked artificial and the birds were singing out of tune. George knocked the acorn of the blind-pull this way and that. Funny, awkward world. He had promised to be on the first tee by half-past nine. He meant to get his handicap down that summer.

From Nell came a series of astonished gasps, followed by single words and names : "Awful. Oh ! Kenneth ! George ! Hardly believe."

George spun round. He was feeling dreadful inside and there was a wobble in his throat. He did not mean his tone to be harsh.

"You knew, of course ? "

"George. I swear. Absolutely, I didn't."

And then she was in his arms with her cheek pressed tightly against his, and words, reassuring, loving words, pouring out—pouring—pouring.

"As if I could love anybody but you ever—ever—ever."

Still clinging they sat on the bed. George was feeling better again, the numbness was vanishing.

"He has never, never even hinted at such a thing."

So ran the torrent.

"Poor old Kenneth," said George. "Poor old Kenneth. I'm so damned sorry for him."

Nell's eyes were full of tears and stars.

"What are we going to do ? "

George felt for a cigarette, lit it, and threw it away.

"I shall see him. We can't let him drift away like this. I'll ask him to come to dinner to-night. You run up to Town for the day, sweet, and come back by the last train."

"But what'll you say ? "

Kenneth had become suddenly frightfully important.

"Dunno. I'll think of something."

"You won't blame him too much, dear."

George looked at his pretty wife.

"Who could—for loving you ? " he said.

Nell wondered why she felt so happy.

"Poor Kenneth. Poor old Ken," she whispered.

George began a search for rays of hope.

"He's fallen in love before and got over it," he said.

Nell did not see a great deal in favour of that argument. She shook her head.

"But they were nothing," she said.

"We must pray for the best, that's all. Let's go down, sweet. No good letting the bacon get cold."

They went down arm in arm.

The sunshine was lovely.

Louisa, to whom was entrusted the delicate

task of telephoning to Kenneth, reported that Mr. Farrell would be pleased to dine with Mr. Forrester at seven-thirty.

George kissed Nell and saw her off by the ten-fifteen. And all the way up to town Nell looked out of the carriage window and thought how sad this happy world was—or how happy this sad world was—but she could not be quite sure which. It seemed very pathetic to be loved by Kenneth—she who had no need of love from any save George. It was so pathetic that she cried a little. She wished she hadn't bullied poor Ken quite so much. Poor Ken. Dear Ken. Loving anyone like that—hopelessly. Such a shame!

Kenneth at the first taste pitched his glass through the open window.

Someone said: "Paddington. All change."

For the rest of the day George played golf vigorously and developed a tendency to press.

Kenneth Farrell came down by train, as his car was out of order. He wore a dinner jacket and brought no suit-case. He arrived at the house at seven twenty-eight, cheerfully consumed a cocktail, and cheerfully took his place opposite George at the dinner table. Throughout the meal they conversed on current topics, and it was not until coffee cups had been cleared away and cigars were lit that George came to the point.

"About that letter of yours, Ken."

Kenneth stiffened in his chair and tilted his head.

"Well, what about it?"

"You claim to be in love with Nell."

"I said so."

"Then in Heaven's name why couldn't you keep it to yourself?"

It was a *cri de cœur*.

Kenneth's face assumed an expression of mild bewilderment.

"What for?" he asked.

"What for? Don't be a damned fool! I know you, Ken, as a man I can trust—absolutely, and you know that I do trust you. But what do you imagine Nell and I felt when we read that letter?"

"There's only one thing you could have felt."

"And what was that?"

"Amusement, I suppose."

"Amusement? There's not much amusement in knowing your best friend is in love with your wife."

Kenneth Farrell jumped out of his chair and stared.

"George!" he exclaimed, "hang on—hang on! You aren't taking that rot seriously?"

"Seriously—how else? And why——?"

Kenneth sat down abruptly and covered his mouth with a nervous gesture.

"My God, what a cad I've been!" he said, and his face shone scarlet.

It was George's turn to rise.

"What do you mean? Come on, out with it."

"I never imagined you'd take it for anything but a joke. D'you mind kicking me out of the house, old chap, just as damned hard as you can?"

For a long while George stared at Kenneth, while anger and relief balanced this way and that within him. Then, drifting across the room, he mixed himself a stiff drink.

He said, "If you wanted to get your own back you've done it with interest. 'Pon my soul, I don't know whether I'm more angry or relieved. I suppose Nell and I can count this as the worst day we've ever spent."

He swallowed his drink and sat in a remote corner.

"We're both fond of you, Ken, and that makes it easier, perhaps, but I wouldn't play monkey tricks with people's emotions, if I were you—not often."

Kenneth came towards him.

"George," he said, "even though you may forgive me, I shall never forgive myself. Lord knows how ever I was ass enough or cad enough to think of such a thing! Ever since I rushed off angry three weeks ago I've been reproaching myself for an ill-tempered idiot. I wanted to think of some funny way of wiping it out. Then your letter arrived—then I had this infernal inspiration—that's all. I think I'll clear out. You'll hardly want this sort of rubbish about the place. I can just catch the nine-forty-five."

But before he had reached the garden gate George was at his elbow.

"Seems to me the function of friendship is that of a shock absorber," he said.

They walked side by side in silence.

On ahead they saw a down train from London, with ruddy steam and golden windows, draw up at the platform.

About a hundred yards from the station was a lamp-post. In its neat circle of light they met a woman coming towards them. It was Nell. All three stood still in a kind of ordered hesitation. Kenneth looked at the ground, George at Nell. Nell's eyes were bright with compassion. "Poor, poor," they seemed to be saying.

"It's all right, old darling," said George. "This Kenneth of ours is a funny bird, and that little letter this morning was his first joke."

Nell said nothing, but from compassion her expression melted into perplexity.

"Joke?" she repeated, turning to George.

He nodded reassuringly.

Then something went cold in Nell's face. Her lower lip twitched inward and small wandering spots of pink mounted to her cheeks.

"I don't know what to say, Nell." This from Kenneth.

"Nothing," she said. "Nothing, of course. Why shouldn't you have a joke—like anyone else?"

"Nell." He raised his eyes to hers, but they were dead of sympathy or forgiveness.

She said:—

"George, I'm tired. Let's go back. Ken won't mind not being seen off. Good night, Ken. Come down next week-end."

"Does that mean I'm forgiven, Nell?"

"For the joke, yes," she said, but there was a reservation behind the words.

SAID George that night, while Nell was brushing her hair rhythmically and staring at her reflection in the mirror:—

"I don't know when I have been so relieved over anything, sweet."

And leaning forward he planted a kiss in the little hollow at the nape of her neck where all good shingles come to an end. From the effect of his action it might have been a blow rather than a caress.

"Don't. Don't ever. I won't be made love to or not, just as you think you will."

"Darling," he protested.

Nell jumped into bed and turned her face to the wall.

There was no more talking that night, but after George had gone to sleep, which he should never have done, Nell went on thinking and went on thinking.

Now pillow thinking is neither profitable nor safe, and the thoughts that kept her awake were raw, angry thoughts, throbbing from a sore place in her soul.

"I could forgive him for being in love with me," she thought. "I *had* forgiven him for that. I could even forgive him for making love to me, but for not loving me—for not loving me? Oh, oh, for saying he loved me and then saying he didn't—for saying it was a joke, oh, never—oh, never. That isn't a joke, couldn't ever be. He can't have begun it as a joke. There must have been another reason. He only said it was a joke to make George happy. He meant it and was fighting against it. He does love me and pretends he doesn't."

Then a blank space. Then common sense callous to pride driving in a wedge.

"He doesn't love me. And it was a joke."

Then bitterness.

"Why did we ever come to this beastly place?"

Then pure pride, and a dangerous resolve.

"But he jolly soon would love me if I wanted him to."

A feeble echo of conscience added:—

"Which I don't."

Then curiosity buzzed with:—

"Or do I? Or do I?"

She stirred, bit the back of her hand, and the whole of her being sent out a trembling S.O.S.

"Why doesn't George wake up and take

me in his arms? Doesn't he know I'm drifting out to sea?"

But George slept on.

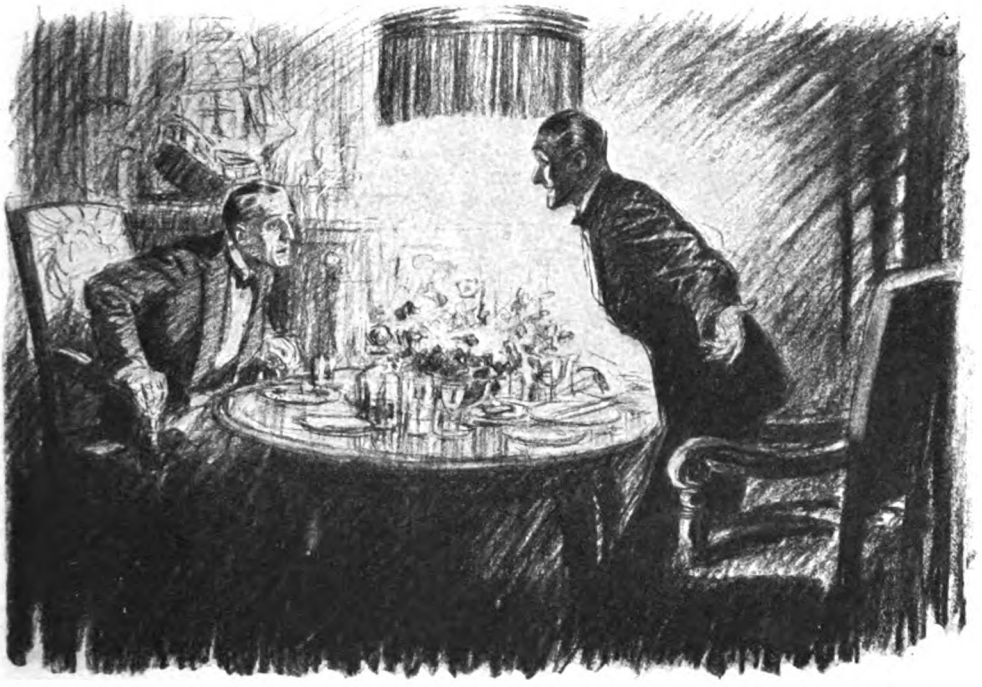
"Haaa! Tsss—haaa—tsss!"

Even breathing.

"Do I want him to love me?"

Once more the waves of thought beat and beat against a crumbling beach. Then :—

since Ken's letter having met with but scant enthusiasm, he had devoted his leisure to the business of getting his handicap down. George was tiresome in that way. If he failed at one thing he cheerfully hopped off and did something else. Nell's reluctance to be made a fuss of had not disturbed him at all. In the past they had



"George!" he exclaimed, "hang on—hang on! You aren't taking that rot seriously?"

"I've a jolly good mind—I've a jolly good mind——"

In the letter Nell wrote to Kenneth she said :—

"We will never speak of this again."

It had been a difficult letter to write because of the sudden and complete change that had taken place in Kenneth. From her slave he had put himself in the position of a ruler. It was obvious that their relationship would have to be reconstructed. As a supplicant for love he might still have been kept in slavery, but as one who had said baldly: "I do not love you," he had assumed a superiority exceeding Czardom. To speak thus is to express complete mastery. Here were facts that nothing could alter; not even Kenneth's abject attitude when, after the passing of days, he presented himself without notice about five o'clock on Saturday afternoon. George was out—at golf. George was golfing relentlessly. The few affectionate advances he had made made a great fuss of one another, and, he reflected, they would probably do so again in the future. It remained to make the best use of the present that opportunity afforded. His putting was improving out of all recognition.

Kenneth, who brought a lot of roses. dropped them in a garden chair beside Nell and leaned awkwardly against a fruit tree.

The important subject being forbidden, he had nothing to say.

Kenneth always brought flowers, and always when she received them Nell hastened to put them into water. But on this occasion she did not do so. She played with the petals as if they were children's hands, and seemed unable to take her eyes from them. When silence had gone too far Kenneth asked if there were any good new books she could recommend.

Nell was startled at the question.

"No. I thought perhaps you'd know some."

"Always take my cue from you," he said.

"Yes, you used to, I remember," she said. "How funny!" and gave an awkward laugh.

Kenneth was bewildered. She seemed all of a sudden much younger. She seemed unlike George's wife. It was queer—disturbing.

He asked:—

"Has there been much going on—down here?"

Two foreheads smacked together and the nonsense was knocked out of the pair of them.

"No—yes—I don't know," said Nell. "I don't seem to have done anything—lately."

Inside her head a voice kept repeating:—

"Why is that man so upset if he doesn't love you? What other reason made him spend so much of his time with you?"

"I don't know," she repeated.

"George out?"

Her eyes ranged quickly—looking for George. Then she remembered.

"Yes, at golf. How stupid—I'd forgotten."

Kenneth was silent and Nell thought his breathing sounded difficult—uncertain. It came as music to her ears.

"Unlike you to forget—George," he said.

"Yes, isn't it? Yes. That's something I—mustn't—ever—do."

Her voice was full of fear now—of pain.

Suddenly his hands were on her shoulders—on the shoulders of this different woman.

"Nell — Nell — what's wrong?"

"Ken, don't — don't." The voice wasn't hers. His grip tightened. He was on his knees.

"Nell, Nell, my dear, my love—tell me."

So he had said it — had said he loved her, voluntarily. But was it voluntary, or had she driven him to make the declaration? No — a hundred times no. She had done nothing—had just sat there—playing with the flowers he had brought—talking commonplaces in a funny vague voice. Not one word of disloyalty had she spoken; not a look—only — only — because her pride had been injured she had turned herself into bait to catch this poor emotional fish, and now he had taken the hook she hated herself and pitied him from the bottom of her heart. Then she knew that out of pity anything—anything might happen—that because of pity she was standing at the edge of disaster. A sudden fear of the unknown took her in its grip. In another instant she would be beyond help.

"Get up. Get off your knees. Oh, it's so cheap, so cheap," she wailed.

With both hands she thrust him away.

You can never be sure with those folding deck chairs. Exposure to sun and rain destroys the nature of the fabric. A sudden movement and anything may happen. With a sharp tearing sound the canvas split from side to side and Nell went through. The jar as she struck the lawn sent her body forward. Their two foreheads smacked together with the crack of a child's pistol, and the nonsense was knocked out of the pair of them. The pain and surprise was mutual.

"Ohooo!" came from Kenneth.

While from Nell was startled an angry:—

"You great clumsy idiot."

Asprawl on the grass, they stared at one another. Kenneth dizzy, blank, and contrite—Nell hot, hurt, and indignant. So for an unspeaking moment. Then Nell began to laugh, and out of that laughter their old relationship was miraculously reborn.

Once again she was in command and his short reign was over.

Nell led the way as they walked towards the house in search of a drink, and Kenneth pattered after her like a faithful hound.

When George came home he found his wife and his friend discussing marriage, or rather Nell discussed and Kenneth listened.

"I've been telling Ken," she said, "that it is high time he got engaged to a nice sensible girl and married her. I have been telling him that he is not to come here again until he *is* engaged."

Later, after Kenneth had gone, George took her to task.

"A pretty tall order you set the poor old stiff," said he. "After all, he may not fall in love with anybody for ages."

Nell shook her head pityingly.

"A man doesn't fall in love," she said. "He just obeys the woman who thinks he'll do."

George laughed.

"Oh, come, sweet, that's awful rot. In the early stages it's the man who sets the pace."

"Pace doesn't impress a woman," said Nell.

"Then what does?"

The truth was startled from her.

"Indifference, of course."

"Here, hold on. Indifference is the very thing you women reproach us for."

"Well, naturally," said Nell.

George scratched his chin, mused, half-opened his mouth, thought better of what he was going to say, and closed it again. Nell watched. She read his thoughts. He was going to ask about Ken's letter, and whether Ken's explanation of the letter had hurt her pride. The questions were plainly written in his honest, puzzled face. Suddenly he was curious.

He said, slowly:—

"They've brought my handicap down to five."

Nell frowned a little, came forward, and put her arms round his neck. Her head, tilted forward and nuzzling against his chest, made it quite easy to kiss that little hollow at the nape of the neck where all good shingles come to an end. Events proved that George had been singularly right in assuming that they would make a great fuss of one another in the future. In the time that followed he found that his handicap had been reduced all round. Which goes to show that even a practical joke may have a satisfactory ending, although it is unlikely.

ACROSTICS.

OUR thirty-fifth series of acrostics begins with No. 165, printed below, and will run for four months. Prizes to the value of twelve guineas will be awarded to the most successful solvers.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 165.

WINTER is white—the snowdrop shows;
Summer is red—she brings the rose;
Then Spring is yellow, for she gives
The early *these*—the nodding *those*.

1. A dozen ounces, or sixteen.
2. In Ivanhoe, a heroine.
3. This is itself, without a doubt.
4. A useful watch-dog, strong and stout.
5. Musical term, denoting round.
6. Part hard, where fruit-trees should abound.
7. Enough, but half must disappear.
8. Where all is noble, most is ear.
9. On little boats they still are met;
Alter the head, and tails we get.

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 165 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on April 8th. They must be written on half-sheets of notepaper, or on cards; at the foot of the solution must appear the solver's pseudonym, which must consist of one word only. Nothing else must be written on the same paper. Flimsy paper should not be used.*

To every light one alternative answer may be sent, provided that it is written at the side.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 164.

1.	B	reacac	H
2.	L	lli	A
3.	U	ppe	R
4.	E	minenc	E
5.	B	i	B
6.	E	ug	E
7.	L	oyo	L
8.	L	avic	L
9.	S	ardine	S

NOTES.—Light 1. Breacacha. Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, Oct. 5. Light 2. Tennyson. The Princess, Prologue. 3. Of a shoe, kicking out a rogue. 5. Bib, a fish, pout. 6. Eugene Aram. 7. Loyola. 8. Clavicle, collar-bone.

"How My Plots Come To Me"

PART II.

By

F. BRITTEN AUSTIN
GILBERT FRANKAU
E. TEMPLE THURSTON
J. D. BERESFORD
COMPTON MACKENZIE
ROLAND PERTWEE
"SAPPER"

W. W. JACOBS
SHEILA KAYE-SMITH
IAN HAY
STACY AUMONIER
DENIS MACKAIL
W. B. MAXWELL
EDGAR JEPSON

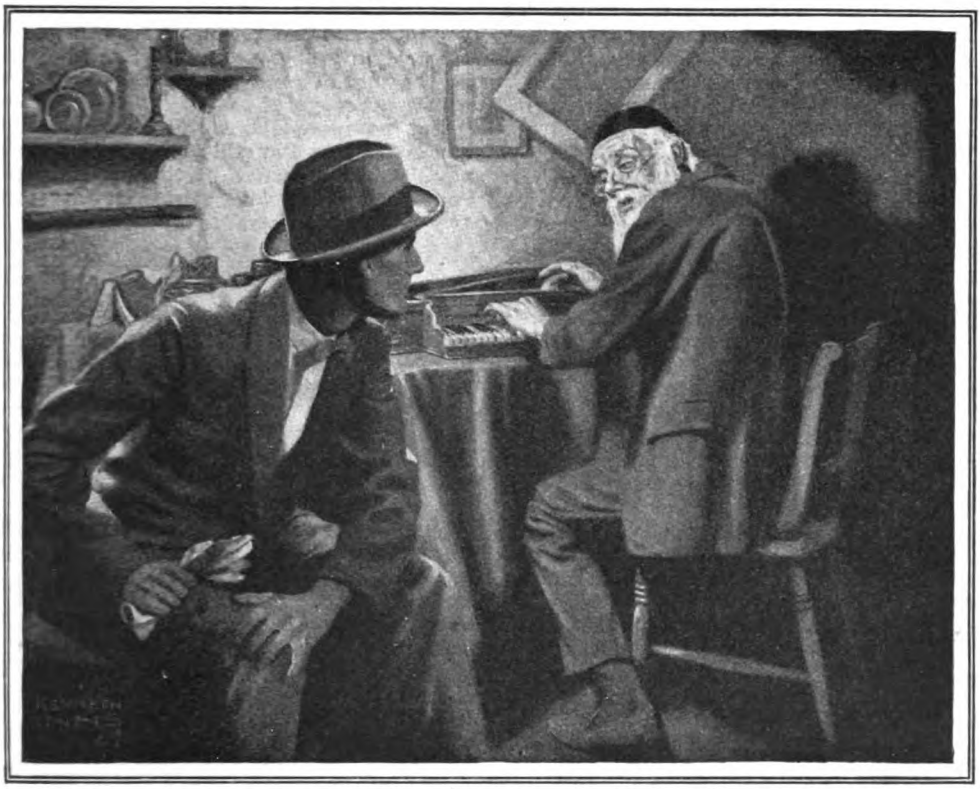
MAX PEMBERTON

In the preface to "The Old Wives' Tale" Mr. Arnold Bennett has described how the idea of writing that book came to him one night in a restaurant in Paris, and in his book of reminiscences Mr. H. A. Vachell has done the same thing regarding "Quinney's." In the following pages a number of other eminent authors give their own experiences on similar lines.

F. BRITTEN AUSTIN.

RARELY does my work derive from any specific inspiration in real life; usually I search patiently until I hit upon a good idea among those which more or less spontaneously emerge. Once or twice, however, a dream has supplied me with a workable plot. Such was the origin of the first story I ever had published, and therefore to me has some significance as being the authentic commencement of my career as a writer.

For some years previously I had repeatedly been plagued with a most unpleasant dream. It occurred to me first on the night before I fell ill after overstraining myself with mountaineering in the Pyrenees, and thereafter its recurrence—and on numerous occasions it re-enacted itself in precisely similar detail and precisely similar horror—infallibly presaged an illness. I dreamed that I went into an antique shop in Wardour Street—a shop that had a real existence and was well-known to me. The old gentleman who kept it, a curious old figure in a skull-cap and shuffling slippers, invariably began his dream-operations by showing me a curious old watch in the form of an enamelled tulip which opened upon pressure of a spring. He then invariably, upon some pretext which held my interest, inveigled me into descending into a cellar under the shop. That cellar was lit by electric-light, furnished with all manner of bric-à-brac, and contained among other things an ancient spinet. The old gentleman always gave me precisely the same somewhat leering, peculiarly hypnotizing smile, opened it, and sat himself down to the keyboard. His fingers caressed the yellowed notes, and from the instrument came weirdly, eerily, a dulcet melody that was strangely and thrillingly not of this earth. It wove an uncanny spell over all my faculties, held me paralysed in an inexplicable horror that grew and grew. That horror leaped always to a shock of reinforced intensity when, suddenly, I perceived that the instrument *had no strings*. Still the old man continued to play, and as he played I could feel the room begin to whirl round and round me, while I was in an agony of indefinable terror



"The old man continued to play, and as he played," says Mr. Britten Austin, "I could feel the room begin to whirl round and round me."

at that stringless spinet which emitted so magical a melody. And then, very slowly, the old man would turn round and smile at me, peculiarly, significantly, in some dreadful significance beyond my conscious interpretation—and always at that point I woke with a scream, and always next day I was ill

I became very tired of this ominous obsession, and one day it occurred to me that possibly I might get rid of it—"exteriorize it," I believe would be the modern psycho-analytic term—if I put the mysteriously malignant old gentleman into a story. I thought this with no hope of financial profit. Variously diverse as were the London editors whom in those days I bombarded indefatigably with MSS., they were singularly alike in one respect. Not one of them had the slightest use for anything I wrote. Never had I attained the intoxicating dignity of print—if I could have afforded it, I would have paid one of those editors to publish me, *just for once!*

I started, therefore, on my story. But it would not work out at all as in my dream. As every writer knows, a story has sometimes a way of taking charge of itself. It was so in this case. The old antique dealer was duly there, and I succeeded in revenging myself to the extent of making him a miserly and distinctly unpleasant character. Also the tulip-watch played a prominent part, although quite other than in my dream. I finished the story, which I called "The Dealer in Antiques," and, to my genuine amazement, almost immediately sold it. Whether, in fact, I had pulled out some obscure thorn in my subconsciousness, I do not know—but from the day I wrote that story (it is now many years ago) I have never had that ill-omened dream again. And from that day I began, slowly but steadily, to move ahead along a path which from boyhood had been my sole ambition.

GILBERT FRANKAU.

"TELL me, Mr. Frankau—or *do* tell me, Captain Frankau—how *do* you get the first ideas for a novel?" Heavens—how often one has heard that question!

And what an impossible one it is to answer! For an author's ideas—mine, at any rate—are at first so inchoate, so formless, that one hardly knows when, or whence, or why they came. My "Peter Jackson," for instance, didn't start as a war book at all. Peter Jackson himself was only to be a subsidiary character—and the date of the book 1912–1913. It was only *after* I'd written that book, and called it "The Woman of the Horizon," that I got the idea of making my subsidiary character into the hero of a 1914–1918 romance. Indeed, I'm not at all sure that if—when I came back from the war—anybody had offered me a decent job in a merchant's office, "Peter Jackson" would have been written at all.

For—shocking though this may appear to the romantics—all authors' original ideas can be traced to the one root, Hunger. Some of us are hungry for a living, some for fame, some merely for self-expression. But unless and until some such hunger is aroused in us, we don't write at all. And only after it is aroused do we begin—either consciously or subconsciously—to cast about for what I call "the original germ of the tale." Then, however—at least in my own case—almost any little incident will implant that germ in one's brain. And after that it grows apace. (There are false germs, too, in my own case—germs that don't germinate, if I may call them so. But these one learns to distinguish by experience—much as a farmer will distinguish bad seed from good.)

And writing of these "germs," I fancy that the most startling instance I have so far encountered is the germ of the novel on which I am just about to start work. For all that novel will have come—is coming, indeed, mentally though not yet upon paper—from a chance sentence overheard in the New York Subway, and the chance look from a woman's eyes. "He's a queer guy," said that woman; "and if once he fell for a girl, he'd never get over it. See?"

Nothing much in that, you'll say. And there wasn't much more in the woman's look either. It was just—just a little sad about the "queer guy"; a trifle pensive, too; and—or so at least I thought—a trifle surprised. Still, the look and the words set me thinking. "Fidelity," I thought. "Male fidelity. The story of Evangeline. Only the wrong way round." And from that, in eight months, I've got the complete plot, and all the characters, of my next book.

Funny, isn't it? Yet not nearly so funny as the fact that, germinating, this germ seems to have undergone a complete metamorphosis. I started with the idea of making a man my central character, you see—and in the end that central character is going to be a woman. What sort of a woman? you will ask. Yet need you ask that question? Isn't it fairly obvious? Won't my heroine be the sort of woman who would think a man a queer guy if——

But no more about this new novel of mine. Because I'm still young enough as a novelist to be haunted by the fear of somebody—somebody who can write at least as well as I can—*stealing my plot.*

E. TEMPLE THURSTON.

CHARACTER is the fount of story. Whenever I see one of those fountains that emerge out of the mouth of some carved grotesque or beautiful figure, I realize it is symbolic of the telling of a tale. Without character a story is as thin and flat as many of the films one sees nowadays in the picture theatres. Therefore, whenever I come across an arresting character in real life, it always sets my mind in motion imagining the kind of story that character would create.

It was in a little village in Kent that I came across Mr. Abnett, the proprietor of a travelling fair. He was paralysed from head to foot. Except when he was carried to his bed at night in the caravan, he lived in a wheeled chair that was pushed about for him from place to place by one of his children. I used to sit with him at night in the middle of his pitch with the merry-go-rounds, the swings, the coco-nut shies all about us. He took up a place in the centre by the side of a huge brazier, alive with burning coke. From that spot he could see everything that was done. From that chair, despite all his afflictions, he expounded the most cheerful philosophy of life I have ever heard.

He could tell to a pound from that place of vantage how much money the show was taking night by night. And no one ever defrauded him of a penny because he believed in the principles of self-containment. The whole business was staffed by his children. He had nineteen—eight boys and eleven girls. One and all, his wife included, they ran the show for him. His youngest girl, Chikka, aged ten, conducted a stall close to his chair, so that he could give her advice if she needed it. So far as I could see she needed none.

"All you ring you have."

That was her stall, and once, when a hopper's child tried to sneak what she could without the qualification of skill, Chikka had her by the hair and spat in her face and kicked her shins.

All the characters of that family simply shouted a story at me of vagrant life, and I began from that first moment of meeting

"He lived in a wheeled chair," says Mr. Temple Thurston, "and I used to sit with him at night in the middle of his pitch."

Mr. Abnett to make my study for "The Goose Feather Bed." Mr. Ablett in those pages is not paralysed, and he is the proprietor of a circus that I followed in Kent. But in spirit he is the same as that old man whose philosophy I listened to by the side of his coke fire, and but for the Mr. Abnett of fact would never have existed as the Mr. Ablett of fiction.

J. D. BERESFORD.

I GREATLY dislike going into a big draper's shop, even when I am adequately chaperoned by my wife. In those surroundings I have a feeling of being unpleasantly and all too conspicuously out of place. I am sure that all the assistants are regarding me either with suspicion or amusement. Unconsciously, I cast myself for one of the two parts I imagine to be assigned to me: the mean, reluctant husband, or the complaisant, easy fool. For which reason, when my wife went shopping at one of those big places in Oxford Street some fifteen years ago, I said that I would wait for her outside.

I had a long time to wait. What her purchases may have been I have completely forgotten—she does not remember herself—but, as is so often the case on occasions of this kind, they involved careful selection And as I had nothing else to do, I observed the crowd about the long range of plate-glass windows, and began to wonder. These women looked so eager, so greedy even, for the materials of that display, which to me was as dull as a coal-merchant's price-list. What was it, I asked myself, that so stimulated their desires? Was it the idea of making themselves attractive to the other sex? Was it the sense of rivalry with other women? Or was it the expression of some profound and fundamental instinct for display? Then I began, by way of testing my theories, to imagine what would be the effect on these women of the all but complete extinction of the male race. Fascinating speculation. Let us postulate, for instance, a plague of unprecedented virulence, to which women were immune, sweeping across Europe, across the whole world, to eliminate, with one or two rare exceptions, the entire masculine element of society. What would be the effect, not only on women's dress, but on their manners and their lives? When my wife came out with a slightly-flustered air, fully armed with the apologies and excuses necessary on such occasions, she found, instead of the querulous, impatient, distinctly ill-tempered husband

she had every right to anticipate, a man with a somewhat whimsical smile, who appeared to be completely unaware how long he had been kept waiting.

When it was first published in 1913, the book that I wrote on that theme was called "Goslings," but in America and in the cheap edition I changed the title to "A World of Women." And I do claim that, within limits, I answered the questions begotten by my sight of that avid crowd about the draper's windows.

COMPTON MACKENZIE.

ONE afternoon nearly twenty years ago, I turned aside from a lane in Cornwall to visit a friend of mine who lived in a grey dilapidated farmhouse and cultivated some forty or fifty acres of land remote from the high road. He himself was a strange, gaunt, solitary man, and often the prey of religious melancholy.

"Come in! come in!" he bade me. "And the missus will give 'ee some tay."

"Missus?" I echoed in surprise.

"You didn't know I were married since you came this way last? Ess, ess, I'm married sure enough. Have you ever heard tell of a place in London called the Leicester Lounge?"

I looked more astonished than ever.

"My missus was barmaid there, and I met her when I were up to London for business a week ago. And I asked her to marry me, and we were married by licence three days after."

The gaunt farmer went to the head of the staircase.

"Come down, my dear. There's a gen'elman wanting his tay."

In a minute or two the bride entered. She was the typical London barmaid of that period, with fair, frizzy hair built up on a pompadour—a woman of about thirty-five, with rich curves. She seemed bewildered by her position, and could only reply to my chatter with mincing Cockney affirmatives.

Going back to my cottage that night in the dusk I wondered what history could explain that woman's abrupt resolve to sever herself utterly from the familiar life of London and immure herself in this bleak Cornish farm. The possible story lay at the back of my mind for another three years, until my association with H. G. Pelissier at the Alhambra gave me the notion of making a ballet-girl my heroine, and bringing her at last away from London to a Cornish farm.

My own heroine in "Carnival" has been for many years a great deal more actual to me than that ex-barmaid; but even now when my mind travels back I sometimes ask myself what was the true explanation of her sudden flight into marriage with a man she had only just met, and I see her sitting there so bewildered in that grim farmhouse within sound of the sea beating against the cliffs instead of the roar of London traffic, and instead of the street lamps daffodils and primroses in a dusky green meadow where the pigs were routing.

And recently there were pictures in the papers of the sale of the garish fittings of the Leicester Lounge. *Sic transit.*

ROLAND PERTWEE.

THE circumstances surrounding the writing of the first of the stories relating to Lord Louis Lewis, antiquary and connoisseur, which under various titles appeared in THE STRAND MAGAZINE, are not without interest, inasmuch as they reflect the natural cupidity of an author's mind. The story was called "Eggshell," and the idea came to me in the following manner.

I was putting in a long week-end at the country house of a friend who was blessed with a very fine collection of Oriental porcelain and cursed with a chronic neuralgia. The neuralgia, which kept him to his bed, drove me, for lack of companionship, to interest myself in the porcelain. At first I was content merely to look, until a mischievous desire to touch persuaded me to open the cases and handle what they contained.

Chief among his treasures was an exceedingly rare eggshell plate, recently valued at about three hundred pounds. Ignorant of the fact that your true expert handles such treasures with a firm and constant grip, I raised the fragile thing between the tips of my fingers—and dropped it.

The floor was of parquetry and the value of the plate was greater than, at that time, the sum-total of my earthly belongings. Some such lightning realization must, in that awful moment, have lent to my hands a juggler's cunning, for even before it reached the floor I made a sweep and lifted it for six into a sofa five feet away.

The plate was undamaged, which is more than may be said of my nervous system. Under the influence of an uncontrollable ague I restored the eggshell plate to its ebony stand and collapsed upon a window seat.

It was then, or perhaps a few minutes later, a plot took shape in my mind, whereby had the plate actually been broken the responsibility for the mishap might be diverted.

The idea was intricate and demanded the substitution of an imitation plate such as may be obtained from the depots of the large tea importers in the West-end.

Briefly, it was this. My host was a short-sighted man, who without his glasses dwelt in a fog. To the rim of the imitation plate was to be affixed, with a dab of wax, a very light fishing cast. A moment, preferably at dusk, was to be chosen when, he being without his glasses, I was to put the plate in his hand and ask some question about it. His first action, of course, would be to look for his glasses, and while so engaged I, from a distance of ten feet, under cover of a loud sneeze, would twitch the plate from his fingers by means of the fishing cast.

"Before the plate reached the floor," says Mr. Pertwee, "I made a sweep and lifted it for six into a sofa five feet away."

I argued, and I believe rightly, that a man's mind being concerned with the search for his glasses, plus the noise of the sudden sneeze, would be deadened to the ordinary susceptibilities of touch, and that it was unlikely that his fingers would have felt the twitch which flicked the plate from his grasp.

To complete the fraud would be simplicity itself, merely demanding a little minor conjuring in the matter of substituting the fragments of the genuine plate for those of the imitation.

It is, of course, impossible to say whether these fraudulent measures would have prospered as well in fact as in fiction. Fortunately I was not driven to make the experiment.

"Eggshell" was my first adventure in story-writing, and, reviewing the incident that inspired it, points to a very narrow margin of safety between a life of letters and a life of crime.

"SAPPER."

I WAS sitting in a certain club-house in Scotland one evening in the early summer of 1919. I had just finished a round of golf with a man I had never met before, and who, I devoutly prayed, I should never meet again. He was, without exception, the most unpleasant individual I had ever encountered. He had grumbled and groused the whole way round the links; he had delivered himself of hoarse noises on the green just as I was putting; and he deliberately cheated in at least one bunker. In addition, Nature had endowed him with a permanent sniff.

Still, he was a member, and I was not, so

I had endured my agony in silence, resolving only that sooner than play with him again I would flee the country.

It was at that moment that a man I knew slightly came in and asked me with whom I had been playing. I told him, and he looked pensively out of the window.

"During the war," he said, "I killed, to the best of my belief, two Germans—an action, they tell me, of merit. But if, during the peace, I killed your opponent of this afternoon, it would not be an action of merit. In fact, they would probably hang me. Why?"

The question was unanswerable. Why, indeed? The contention that man must live, however obscure the necessity, cannot surely apply to a person with a permanent sniff. The suggestion is an outrage on common sense. And suddenly it struck me how wonderful it would be if a society could be formed for the extermination of unpleasing individuals. I mean there had been at least two moments that afternoon when, had I possessed a lethal weapon, I would have shot my opponent and then jumped on his face with nailed shoes. Only a dream, of course, an ecstatic dream—and then it dawned on me. True, I should never be able to kill that man in reality: I would do it in imagination. And thus was Bulldog Drummond born.

Every one of the twenty-three—or is it thirty-three?—men that Bulldog Drummond has killed up to date is really my opponent of that afternoon. And I hope he sees this, and recognizes himself, and dies in terrible agony out of sheer fright. He won't, of course. He'll only sniff once again, and wonder who the man can be—curse him!

W. W. JACOBS.

I AM unable to recall anything that definitely suggested a story to me. Ideas emerged in a shadowy fashion from types I met, with a background of old-world harbours, remote villages, and ancient inns. My fondness for these, especially the last, no doubt coloured my work. All these things I encountered in my adolescence, but it was only in later years that they seemed to be amusing and worth putting into print. The next step was to persuade editors that they were worth putting into print. This, as anybody who has ever met an editor knows, is a matter of extreme difficulty; and but for a strong constitution, an ardent temperament, and sufficient surplus cash to invest in postage-stamps, would never have been accomplished.

It has seldom been my good fortune to overhear things suitable for print and obtain money by recording them. Almost the only instance was when the night watchman of those days gave me a cigar whose chief, and indeed only, merit was that it had "never paid a farthing of duty." A line which, years afterwards, I used in a play. I have never defrauded the Revenue in that way since. The fact that I retired to bed at six o'clock that evening, together with my boots and trousers, which I was far too ill to remove, is a sufficient testimonial to its strength, its aroma, and the engine-room oil in which it apparently had been preserved.

I had hoped, by improving them morally and physically, to avoid detection on the part of the people I had put in my stories, but in one case I came under cross-examination from the ungrateful model (I had described him as handsome), from which I emerged, if not with flying colours, at any rate with a whole skin. Even so, I fancy I should not have liked to sail under him after that.

I owe nothing to the first night watchman I met. He was too crude. Even at the age of ten I doubted him. He had seen too much. He had served in every kind of craft, from a man-of-war to a pirate brig. It was while in the last that he drew his cutlass and cut off the arm of the unfortunate and foolish lieutenant who was trying to board him. This was his last ship, and he went straight from that into the London police. It seems to lack the ring of truth, but I am inclined to believe that he may, at times, have had some connection with them.

A thin, gaunt Cockney of nineteen has persistently thrust himself into my pages as a ship's cook; a post into which he was thrust by the skipper of the *Thames*, who was just on the point of sailing without one. As a passenger and guest I was not at liberty to express my opinion of his efforts, but the cabin and the fo'c'sle made ample amends. Nobody could have cooked worse than he did, but I still think that, for a bricklayer's labourer, too much was expected of him. I hold him in kindly memory because, in the competition forced on us by the two ends of the ship, he was sick first.

SHEILA KAYE-SMITH.

THE themes of "Sussex Gorse" and "Joanna Godden" were suggested to me by the late Mr. W. L. George. In the case of the second, we were walking through a farmyard in the Isle of Wight, and noticed that the wagons of the farm were of a very eccentric design, also that they bore a woman's name upon them instead of

a man's. He immediately suggested to me that I should write a book about a woman farmer, whose tastes were indicated by the flamboyant design of her wagons. Hence the idea arose.

Another story the idea of which came to me very definitely on one occasion was "The End of the House of Alard." I had been looking over an old house in the midst of a large derelict estate, and was told how the family had gradually become impoverished and had now died out, the only heir being a nun in a religious order. Some of the characters and incidents of the book are actually drawn from the family in question, but naturally a great deal has had to be altered and transposed.

I do not think that in any other story I can definitely point to any one occasion giving me the idea. They have arisen gradually, and it would be difficult to tell how they came, though "Tamarisk Town" was certainly suggested by a series of dreams of an old town, which did not, however, provide me with any characters or a story.

IAN HAY.

IT is one of my pet beliefs that there is no such thing as sheer literary imagination—that you cannot start a story from nowhere and create it out of nothing at all. You must have a germ of some kind to start on, however small; and that germ must be obtained from some concrete source, such as an odd paragraph in a newspaper, an incident witnessed in the street, a chance episode in one's own daily life, or an idle remark let fall in the course of ordinary conversation.

It has often amused me to look over some former novel or play of mine and speculate as to how I came to write it. As a rule, I can trace the event to some long-buried and almost forgotten incident.

Here is an example. I once read a police report in a Paris newspaper about a poor old woman who had been convicted of stealing books from one of the second-hand bookstalls on the Rive Gauche. She lived in great poverty in one small room, and as it happened could neither read nor write. She had taken those books because their mere presence in her apartment gave her a certain literary prestige among her equally illiterate friends. Out of that paragraph I wrote a short story of about five thousand words—I made my central figure an old man instead of an old woman—and it was published both in England and in America. The idea had cost me exactly ten centimes.

My play, "The Sport of Kings," was built up on a story I once heard about two bookmakers at the Derby. As not infrequently happens, they were unable to pay out over the last race, and were in danger of suffering the usual penalties which attach to the profession of welsher, when one of them, who had brought down a mysterious black bag, contrived to retire for a few moments behind some bushes, whence he re-emerged dressed as a policeman. He then took his colleague into custody, and marched him off to safety,

And of course to a certain extent authors all crib from each other. I got the idea for the concluding chapters of my first book, "Pip," from J. C. Snaith's "Willow the King"—as I gratefully acknowledged to Mr. Snaith when I met him some years later. It is true that by the time I had twisted the idea to my own purpose it had lost all semblance to Mr. Snaith's idea. Still, if I had never read "Willow the King," I should never have written those closing chapters of "Pip."

STACY AUMONIER.

SOON after I left school I became a decorative designer to a big firm of decorators in Oxford Street. As it was my first plunge into what might be called social life it was naturally a very impressionable time for me. When I had begun to take stock of my surroundings, one of the things, I remember, which impressed me was the variety of character among the salesmen. Some were ignorant and uneducated, others just the opposite. It was a time of fair industrial prosperity, and many of these salesmen were handling big jobs and making quite a lot of money. Also in those days the "pubs" were open all day, and drinks were very cheap.

Times have changed so much during the last twenty years that it is probably difficult for a man in that line of business to-day to realize how they used to go on then. But I know for certain that it was customary for these gentlemen to be darting in and out of the gilded "pubs" of Oxford Street from ten in the morning till midnight. They conducted a large bulk of their business over tankards and glasses. I remember a number of these men quite vividly. Particularly do I remember a big, puffy, shabbily florid man whom I will call Mapleson, and a quiet, sleek little man whom I will call White. They were always about together. White drank himself to death. One night I remember seeing Mapleson talking to a shabby, ugly, elderly-looking woman in a side-street. He was looking very self-conscious, and obviously trying to get rid of her. I jumped to the

conclusion that she was his wife, and I began to speculate upon the home lives of some of these gentlemen who moved against such an opulent setting, and who spent so much money on each other in liquid refreshment.

It was nearly fifteen years later that I began to write fiction. And looking around for the plot of a story, I remembered White and Mapleson, and the shabby wife in Argyll Street. I wrote a story, which I called "The Friends." It was my first, and, for whatever that may be worth, probably my most successful short story. In any case, it has been used as the subject for a sermon!

DENIS MACKAIL.

PEOPLE have often been kind enough to ask me where I get what they politely call my "ideas," but I have noticed that their patience generally evaporates while I am still trying to explain. And even now that I have been given the opportunity of interpreting the mystery in my favourite medium—that is to say, pen and ink—I'm not at all sure that I shall be able to do it.

This much I do know. That all my best and brightest notions for stories come to me—presumably from what I am told to call my subconscious mind—at moments when I have no earthly chance of writing them down. At luncheon-parties, in my bath, at the dentist's, in the Underground—what brilliant little scenarios have not occurred to me in such circumstances! The dentist or the lovely lady sitting next to me has noticed a look of anguished preoccupation spread over my simple features, as I have sought vainly for some means of fixing the image before it fades. The very instant that I could escape, I have rushed off to the nearest sheet of blank paper—only to find that my tricky memory has again retreated where it is no longer possible to pursue it. The idea has gone. The sheet of paper remains blank.

Sometimes, however, I have just caught the vision by the tail of its coat. I fly to my notebook, hurriedly scribble a few salient words, look at them, alter them, look at them again—and discover that what is left of the idea is either as old as the story of Cinderella, or else is entirely devoid of meaning. If my executors should ever come across that notebook, they will undoubtedly conclude that I was subject to fits of temporary insanity, and all I hope is that they will have the good taste to hush it up.

Nevertheless, this same notebook continues to lie on my writing-table, and I still turn to it for inspiration whenever the time comes round to start a new story. "Old Man in Diving-Bell," I read. Or, "Girl says she didn't but afterwards perhaps." Now, what on earth was I thinking of when I wrote that? I light my pipe, I frown, I march round and round my room, I pause and look out of the window. No, it's gone. Utterly and hopelessly gone. And yet—well, how would it be if I did a story about a young man on the top of an omnibus? Hardly the same thing as an old man in a diving-bell, and certainly very little to do with the girl who said she didn't but afterwards perhaps. But somehow the machine has started working again. I'm back at my writing-table, and I see the whole story stretching out before me like a glimpse of the Promised Land.

After that glimpse I may never see it again. But I've started now. I go plodding along, and—well, that's more or less how I do my writing. I know it doesn't sound very impressive or efficient, but it happens to be the truth; and for all the mental agony which it involves, I have no kind of wish to change my profession for that of a chartered accountant. Nor, I may add, could I possibly do so if I tried.

W. B. MAXWELL.

ONE day, going through Brompton Churchyard, I passed a middle-aged woman with a charmingly refined face, and I asked myself what was the history of her life. Was she married or single? Happy or unhappy? And so on. Then within fifty yards, as answer to such questions, the whole of the book called "Spinster of This Parish" came into my mind. I went straight home and wrote the last chapter of it, and then started working on the first chapter. The book was so fully there that the task of completing it seemed very easy. It was more like re-writing than writing. I suppose that this sudden stimulation from the aspect of an unknown person is not a very unusual experience with authors. I would enlarge upon the subject, but that Mr. Arnold Bennett has described so well, in the preface to his admirable novel, "The Old Wives' Tale," a similar first impetus for a work of imagination.

EDGAR JEPSON.

I CANNOT remember that any particular person or incident gave me the idea of any of my long stories. For the most part I have said to myself: "I will now

write about the woman-hunter"—or the man of action, or the genuine artist, or a little girl with red hair, or an astute murderer. Most of my short stories of late years have been suggested by pieces in my collection of Oriental art. There are swords and ivories and pieces of jade which plainly have their story, if it would only come to you. At the moment I have a lapis-lazuli disk and an old, old jade tiger from a tomb which must have produced, or will produce, the doings that make stories. They will come to me.

But I do remember that two of my short stories came to me oddly. The first came from another story-teller, just come back from the war, who was dining with me and said, "I often feel that I want to sit down on the floor and have a meal in comfort." He could never himself have seen the story in that feeling, but I saw it and wrote it. The second came from a red hat. I was lecturing to the To-morrow Club, and very distinct among the audience was a girl in a red hat with a very pretty, piquant, gipsy face. I wrote a story about that hat and that face about which I received letters of congratulation from dwellers in the most arid deserts in the United States.

MAX PEMBERTON.

THE central idea of my novel, "Kronstadt" (originally "A Woman of Kronstadt") was that an Englishwoman should act the part of spy in some great foreign citadel and should be discovered together with her lover who had helped her.

This idea came to me one night at Gibraltar, when I was quitting the town to rejoin my boat. It was very cold and dark. I was wearing a Russian cap of fur to protect my ears. To my great astonishment, the sergeant at the gate stopped both me and a young Englishwoman who was walking by my side. He led me straight to the guard-house and there asked my name. Directly I had spoken, however, he burst into a loud laugh.

"I thought by your cap you was one of them—— Russians, sir," he said, and so he let me go. The Englishwoman, however, was not released, nor did she rejoin our ship, and I have often wondered what became of her.

It was this thought which gave me the idea of the story. For a long while I searched about mentally for a scene wherein the action should lie, and at one time had thought of Vladivostock and of Metz. Then a visit to Petersburg and a halt by the way at Kronstadt decided me. I received great hospitality there, and saw in a moment that this, the absolutely impregnable fortress of Europe, was the very place for my purpose.

Oddly enough, my story turned out to be a true story. Some years after it had appeared, I had a letter from a great oarsman telling me that I had written the story of his cousin, a young woman who actually had been engaged, and discovered, in an identical intrigue. So once again was fiction justified.

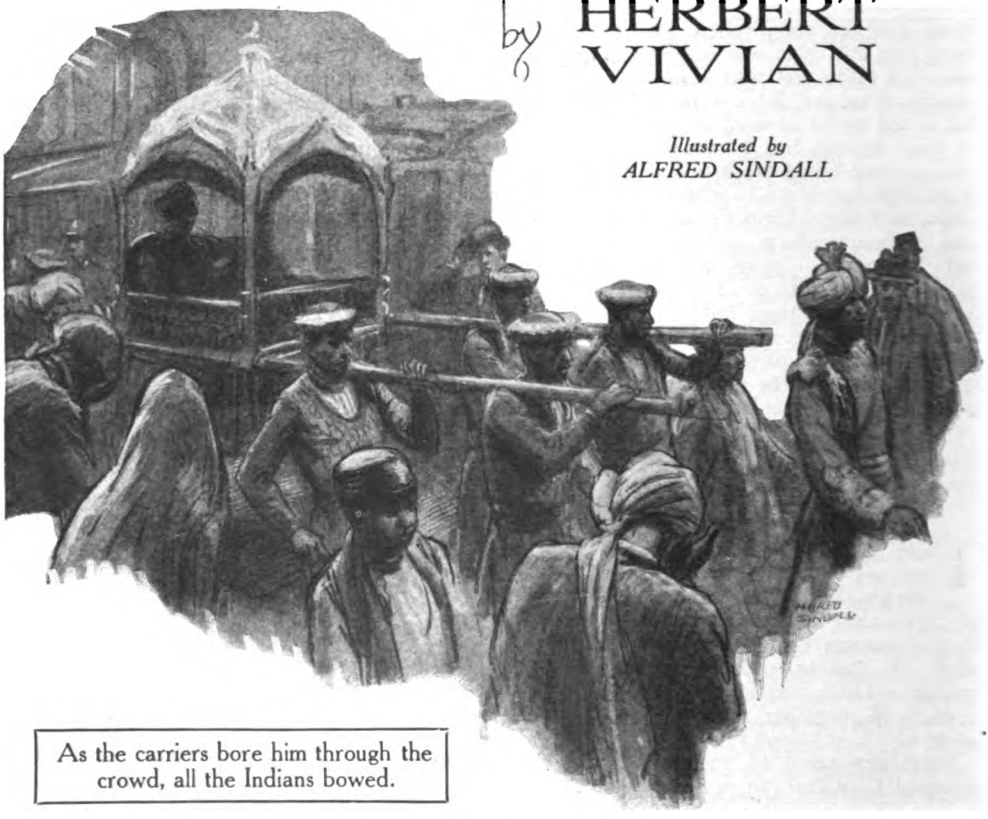
"To my great astonishment," says Mr. Max Pemberton, "the sergeant at the gate stopped us."

THE SUTTEE ON THE SEINE

Adapted from the Italian

by HERBERT VIVIAN

Illustrated by
ALFRED SINDALL



As the carriers bore him through the crowd, all the Indians bowed.

ON the evening of the 20th of March, a remarkable party of travellers alighted from a special train at the Quai d'Orsay station of Paris. Rarely had that cosmopolitan meeting-place beheld so picturesque an assemblage. Both men and women were dressed in the most gorgeous Indian costumes, offering a feast of colours and jewels, gleaming with a thousand kaleidoscopic lights. A note of Oriental mystery was struck by the semi-transparent veils of the ladies, above which their soft dark eyes gazed timidly around, while the rich turbans and gold-embroidered cloaks of the men might have been taken straight out of "The Arabian Nights."

While a procession was being formed on the platform, amid the wondering stares of commonplace travellers, some six or eight men in more modest uniform took a magnificent golden litter out of the train in which they had travelled. And upon it there languidly reclined a dark, handsome young man with penetrating black eyes.

As the carriers bore him through the brilliant crowd, all the Indians bowed to the ground. They looked as though they might have been engaged in some solemn service

of adoration. A procession was formed with the young man on his golden litter at the head, and, passing through the station-yard, it proceeded at a foot's pace towards the centre of Paris.

Republican Paris, with all her professions of liberty and equality and fraternity, loves princes and processions more dearly than the most antiquated or aristocratic capital, and the delight of her citizens may be imagined at this gorgeous and unexpected spectacle. As the brilliant throng passed over the bridge of Alexander III. and into the Place de la Concorde, men, women, and children stopped as though petrified, opening their mouths to gape and exclaim. Many raised their hats to the young man, who saluted with melancholy grace, raising his right hand very slowly, and bowing his head almost imperceptibly.

No one knew who the strangers were. The leader was evidently a royal personage. Some thought he was a prince from the French dependency of Tunis, others pointed out that the costumes were undoubtedly Indian. The know-alls asserted that a religious ordinance compelled these people to enter a city on foot.

"Look at their clothes. That young man must be fabulously rich to bring over such an enormous suite from the ends of the earth."

"Well, everybody knows that Indian potentates possess mountains of diamonds and caves full of rubies."

Then a bright brain suggested that it was a big cinema troupe from America, and that the Prince was Mr. Charles Chaplin in his latest part. But the lack of cameras knocked this idea on the head, and Parisians simply went on wondering. The party moved on their leisurely way to the Grand Hôtel de la Ville, where the proprietor and a large staff received the august potentate with profound bows, helping him out of his litter and escorting him to the principal hall. By this time a dense crowd had gathered outside, full of curiosity about the visitors, and in response to numerous calls the proprietor felt constrained to deliver a short speech.

"This," he said, "is Prince Kutchawallah, the son and heir of the Maharajah of Murzakhand, who rules over the greater part of Central India. He is weary after his long journey, and I trust to the hospitality of Parisians to respect his repose. He intends to remain in Paris, and there will be many opportunities of acclaiming him during his drives through the city."

The Paris papers devoted columns to the royal visit, all with more or less authentic anecdotes about his riches, his fame as a hunter, his intelligence, and so forth. And wherever he went a vast concourse awaited him.

Four days after his arrival the crowds awaited him in vain. He did not emerge from his hotel all day, and there was a general atmosphere of bustle and anxiety. That evening an explanation was afforded by the newspapers. The Prince had been taken ill, and lay in a very dangerous state. This caused a great sensation throughout Paris. All sorts of people came to write their names in his visitors' book, perfect strangers called to suggest infallible remedies, the staff of the hotel had the utmost difficulty in safeguarding his privacy. Only the native physicians he had brought with him were allowed to do anything—he contemptuously disregarded the treatment prescribed by the medicine-men of Europe.

But all the skill of the Indian faculty was lavished in vain. On the 29th of March the newspapers announced that His Highness had passed away during the night.

THEN fresh sensations followed. Late reports described the terrible distress of his young and beautiful widows, left alone and unprotected in a strange land, prostrated by their utterly unexpected and most grievous bereavement. Their moans and lamentations could be heard, it was said, as far away as the Madeleine and the Trocadéro. The landlord of the hotel was very hospitable to representatives of the Press, and provided them lavishly with photographs and biographical details, in return for which he received many expressions of sympathy, for it is well known that a death always injures an hotel, even though it be the death of the richest and most illustrious of the guests.

No other subject was mentioned in the *cafés*, restaurants, or streets, and when every aspect of the tragedy seemed exhausted, the question of the funeral supplied fresh material for curiosity.

The first report was that instructions would have to be awaited from India, and it might take a considerable time. Then news came that the body had been embalmed according to special Hindu rites.

On the 31st of March, sooner than anybody had anticipated, a telegram arrived from India with the following instructions:—

A pyre of perfumed wood was to be prepared at once and placed on a raft on the Seine, so that the corpse could be burnt on the following day. All the Prince's possessions must be burnt with him, as well as the youngest of his wives, who must be burnt alive.

This last provision provoked a storm of controversy beside which the Dreyfus case

might have been considered a zephyr in a tea-cup. The burning of a dead body was unusual, the destruction of valuable jewels was repugnant to the frugal French and their Hebrew statesmen, but the idea of a human sacrifice aroused many protests. An old-fashioned newspaper asked how the chivalrous, generous, and democratic people of France could tolerate the ceremonial murder of a young and beautiful woman in deference to the barbarous superstitions of a coloured race.

The Parisians were divided into two camps. Though the majority clamoured for a prohibition of the human sacrifice, others, including many students of Oriental manners, declared that a father's wishes must be respected, and that all Asia would be affronted by contempt of her secular traditions.

This custom of the suttee, they argued, had persisted in Central Asia from the most remote and glorious ages. If it were abrogated, the Hindus considered that a husband, on his arrival in Paradise, would be deprived of the society of his brightest and most loving companion. A European wife vowed lifelong fidelity, but her Hindu sister was still more to be admired, for she extended her devotion beyond the grave. Indeed, it was regarded as a singular honour among Hindu wives to be chosen as his special helpmeet on the funeral pyre.

THE question became more and more acute. It was admitted that a human sacrifice was contrary to the institutions of France and the principles of civilized society, but a prohibition would be a breach of the laws of hospitality. A guest was sacred, and his sentiments must be respected when his dearest and holiest traditions were at stake. Jurists and statesmen were consulted feverishly, but the problem remained unsolved. Meanwhile time was pressing. Some official decision must be reached, for the instructions from India had fixed the night of the 31st for the funeral, and the members of the Prince's suite were hurrying on the arrangements.

One of them called at the Prefecture of Police, accompanied by a young European, who acted as interpreter. He explained that they had called for a formal permit to carry out the funeral ceremonies on the lines laid down by His Highness the Maharajah of Murzakhand. The Prefect, without committing himself, expressed his condolences, and asked for details of the ceremony.

"The Prince's body," said the interpreter, "will be borne by his most notable functionaries from the place where he died to the nearest spot on the greatest river in the vicinity. According to the customs and traditions of the Brahmins, the corpse will be deposited on a pyre of perfumed and resinous wood set up on a large raft, and the chief mourners will attend on a barge attached to the raft. When the prayers are finished, the pyre will be sprinkled with aromatic gums and holy water from the Ganges. Then all the Prince's most precious possessions will be laid on the raft, in order to ensure his reaching the next world with ample provision. The fire will be lighted with aromatic wood, so that the corpse of His Highness may be consumed and his ashes restored to Mother Nature."

The Prefect remained pensive for a while. Then he declared with a certain reluctance: "This is not in complete accord with our laws, which restrict the cremation and burial of bodies to certain specified places. However, it is not the first time a Brahmin prince has died on our shores, and in the last instance the prince was certainly cremated. So, in deference to the exquisite sense of hospitality which dwells in the breast of every Frenchman, I am prepared to authorize this cremation."

The young man bowed gravely.

"We are much indebted to you," he said, gratefully. "But there is just one point more."

The Prefect looked severe.

"So I surmised," he said, stiffly. "There has been a certain amount of gossip about the presence of the Prince's youngest bride on the funeral pyre."

"Then we have your permission to proceed?"

"By no means. The people of Paris will never tolerate the burning of a young woman within their walls, even though the sacrifice be consummated under the cloak of religion."

"But have the young lady's personal wishes no weight?"

The Prefect stared.

"You are not insinuating that she wishes this herself?"

"Certainly; she is filled with enthusiasm. And the other wives are consumed with jealousy that they have not been selected to accompany their lord to the realms of bliss. They know that the one who dies with him will enjoy the same royal glory that has been hers during this miserable, transitory life."

"Even if all this were true, I could not permit it."

The young man went on imploring.

"But this is a violation of personal liberty. I am amazed that France, the nursing mother and protagonist of freedom, should interfere to deny us the right to perform a ceremony enjoined by our religion

and sanctified by millenary traditions. How can you ask this young wife to abandon her dreams of heavenly bliss? What value can be attached to human life compared with the joys of eternity?"

"Well, for one thing, I refuse to believe that the young woman is doing it of her own free will," said the Prefect, stubbornly.

"Then accompany us to the hotel and interrogate the Princess."

Partly out of curiosity to see the heroine of this unusual romance, partly in order to obtain fresh arguments to defend his decision, which was sure to be criticized whatever it might be, the Prefect accepted the invitation.

The proprietor of the hotel led them to a reception-room on the first floor. The interpreter retired with him, and the Prefect was left alone with the Indian official, who opened a small door behind the arras and disappeared.

DURING rather a long wait, the Prefect overheard a strange, sustained whispering on the other side of the wall, like a gentle lullaby, broken at times by the tinkling of cymbals and the rumbling of drums. It was a strange, almost barbaric music, but not without a certain beauty of its own. He began to feel himself in another world, a world of fancies and dreams, where the burning of a young woman did not seem so strange as in modern France. He listened to the short, sharp cries of the women, little wails of sorrow, no doubt the wives and suite of the Prince engaged in prayers and expiatory chaunts.

The strange soft music ceased suddenly, and a few seconds later came the sound of light footsteps. A curtain was pulled aside, and a young girl entered accompanied by the interpreter. She could not have been more than sixteen, but by European standards she was quite grown-up. A thin veil covered her face, and a long dress of yellow silk, fastened at one shoulder by a big diamond, wound round her waist and fell in soft folds to the floor.

She began speaking in French with a delightful exotic accent.

"Sir," she said, timidly, "I did not expect to find such cruel and pitiless people in Paris, which I have heard called the City of Light."

"Cruel in what way?" asked the Prefect, trying to keep his sang-froid in face of her extreme beauty.

"In refusing me permission to rejoin my beloved husband to-night, according to the forms of our holy religion."

The Prefect bowed low and assumed an air of gallantry.

"It seems to me," he said, "that a lady of such resplendent beauty should wish to live. Our Frenchwomen are not like those of India. Scarcely do they lose one husband before they find another to take his place."

"Sir," said the Princess, proudly, "I must beg you not to blaspheme. If I did not hope to move your noble heart, I should already have sought death by my own hands, so as not to lose a single moment in rejoining my adored lord and master. What greater honour could be mine? Why should I hesitate?"

The Prefect looked bewildered.

"I must confess I cannot understand this yearning for death when you have everything that a woman can desire—youth, beauty, riches——"

"What is all that without love? Do you not understand that, by following my lord, I shall enjoy the most perfect love throughout eternity? I warn you that I intend to follow him at all costs. If you seek to prevent me, I shall kill myself on his body as it is being removed from this house."

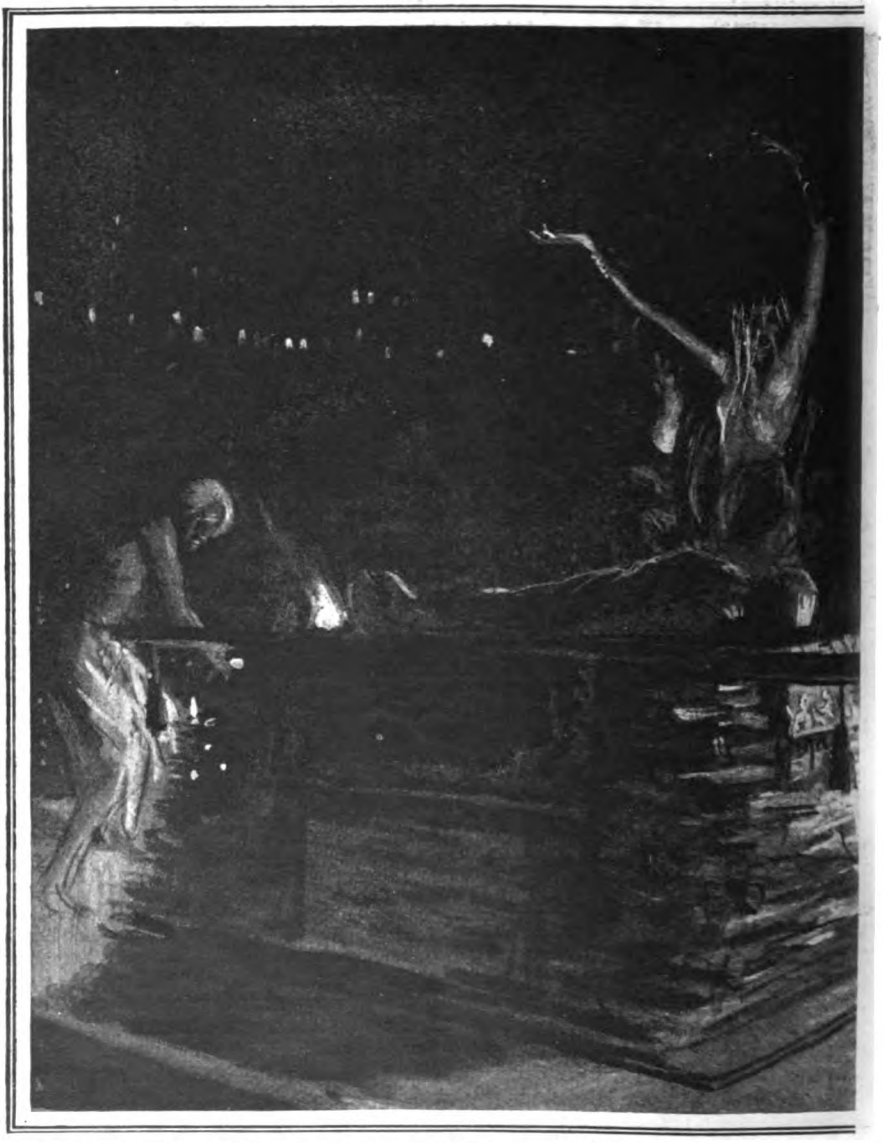
The Prefect began to look at her with very wide-open eyes, asking himself if he were dreaming. But her accents were so sincere that there could be no doubt about her desire to die. That, however, was not sufficient, for if he gave the desired permission there would be a wild outcry throughout the civilized world. And yet what was the use of impeding her ceremonial death if she killed herself with her own hands? But he was determined that she should not die if he could prevent it.

"I will give orders that she shall be watched," he told himself. "She is now going through a nervous crisis which is intensified by her religious mania. If she can be restrained for a few days, she will recover and enjoy life once more."

She seemed to read his thoughts and made a final tragic appeal, but he remained inflexible, and with a low cry she fell swooning at his feet. The Prefect hurried downstairs and gave orders for policemen to occupy the hotel and keep a watch over the Indian visitors, while the excitement in Paris can be more easily imagined than described.

Everybody became a partisan on the great question whether or no the Princess should be allowed to gratify her desire to be sacrificed on the pyre. A Cabinet Council was held on the subject, and after a heated discussion a large majority decided in favour of permitting the cremation of the Prince, but against any sort of human sacrifice.

Meanwhile, near the central bridge of the Seine, a number of Indians were preparing the funeral pyre, which consisted of a stack

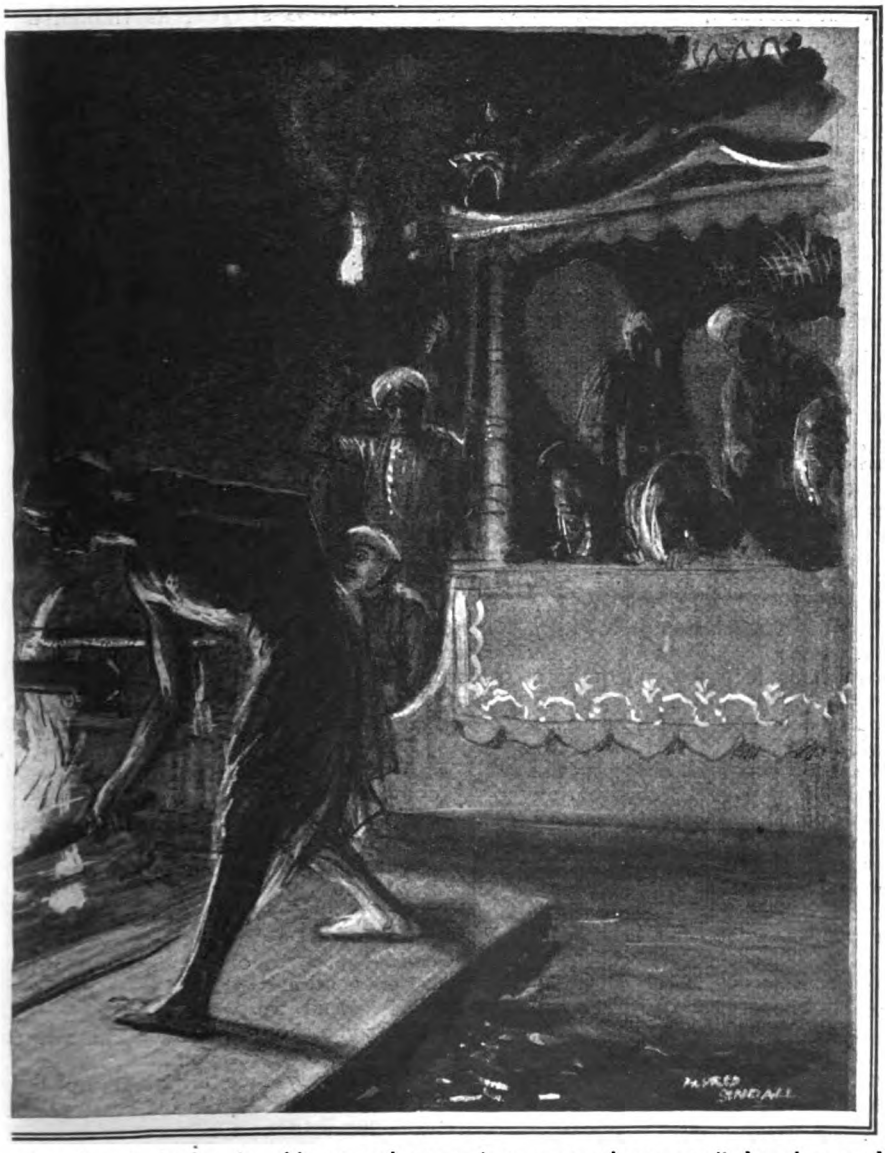


The figure of a veiled woman stepped lightly on to the pyre, waving her arms

of resinous wood on a raft. This was linked to an imposing State barge, gilded, beflagged, and covered with flowers. The pyre itself was decorated elaborately, and many funeral gifts were brought to be buried with the body of the Prince. Huge crowds gathered to watch these preparations, for nothing at all like them had ever been seen in Paris, and no one wanted to miss the smallest detail of this singular spectacle.

As the sun began to sink on the horizon, the throngs grew denser and more excited. No one knew whether the authorities would give way at the last moment and allow the Princess to be burnt alive. Many people were quite certain they were about to witness a human sacrifice, others were equally positive that there would be nothing more dramatic than the cremation of an Oriental, which, after all, would not be without interest.

The ceremony had been announced for midnight on the 31st of March, and was expected to last about two hours. As it was a lovely spring night, nobody shrank



triumphantly in the air. Almost at the same instant a torch was applied to the wood.

from the prospect of a vigil. Indeed, it soon showed signs of developing into a sort of nocturnal carnival. The spectators had provided themselves with wine and oranges and whiled away the time with the latest music-hall songs. The anticipation of a human sacrifice had aroused a spirit of ribald savagery similar to that which actuated the spectators at gladiatorial games in the days of ancient Rome.

At the stroke of twelve a semi-religious silence imposed itself upon the crowd as the sound of barbaric instruments announced from afar that the procession had set out from the hotel.

The Seine presented a huge mass of undulating black waters, swollen by recent rains, and the crowds on the banks seemed to resemble it, swaying and surging and bursting their bonds.

At the head of the procession strutted two small pages in bright Indian costumes, beating drums attached to their necks. Then came the chief courtiers, glittering in silk cloaks of purple and gold. After them the bier was borne aloft on the shoulders of

six youths of the Indian nobility, and on each side were native soldiers, giants brandishing torches, whose yellow light projected mysterious dancing shadows.

Behind the bier a group of princesses, heavily veiled, advanced with bent shoulders, as though weighed down by some heavy burthen, the burthen of grief, which they proclaimed at intervals with penetrating, rhythmical wails.

It was the strangest and most imposing funeral ever remembered in Paris, and at every step soldiers stood to attention, civilians reverently bowed their heads. At last the bier reached the bridge of the Seine, where the big raft and pyre stood forth above the waters in the fitful greenish-yellow light of resinous torches. Very slowly and cautiously the bier was lowered with ropes on to the pyre, and the Hindus began their sacred chaunts.

The silence of the enormous crowd became intense. Not a sound was to be heard save the drowsy movement of the lapping waters. Every eye was fixed upon the torches, anxious above all to see whether the young Princess would attempt to carry out her doom.

The illuminated raft drifted slowly out into the river, drawn by the State barge, which was now filled to overflowing with members of the Prince's suite, and the spectacle was so impressive and magnificent that the crowds found it difficult to refrain from an outburst of applause. When the barge reached the centre of the river, it stopped and the raft was anchored. Now the great ceremony was about to begin. Men's hearts stood still, a sort of electric thrill shivered through each whirling brain.

Then it seemed as though everybody would go mad. The figure of a veiled woman stepped lightly on to the pyre, waving her arms triumphantly in the air. The orders of the authorities had been defied, and now it was too late to interfere. The Princess was about to die. Almost at the same instant a torch was applied to the wood, while the weird lamentations of the Hindus rose almost to shrieks.

A great cloud of smoke rose to the skies, absolutely obscuring the pyre. The crowd watched breathlessly, their eyes glued to the place where a human sacrifice was being consummated. Not a sound was heard above the crackling of wood for some minutes. Suddenly the whole pyre burst into flame.

Then from the onlookers came a gasp of amazement. Instead of the usual appearance of a stack of lighted logs, the whole catafalque seemed to stretch itself out, to assume a new shape, a strangely-familiar shape. The people stared as though they could not believe the evidence of their own vision, for there before their eyes the red flame was twisting itself into the form of a head, a body, a tail. Breathlessly they watched while the emblem unfolded itself, a large red fish, the accepted emblem of All Fools' Day. Then a second set piece went up announcing the date, April the First!

For a moment there was dead silence, then the first impulse was to take vengeance. These people, whoever they were, must be taught that Paris could not be fooled like this. They looked round for the Indians, but every single one had disappeared. Excited people asked the identity of these practical jokers who had offered such a monstrous affront to the people of the first city in the world. But there was no one to satisfy them. The State barge proved to be a fast motor-boat, which quickly gathered speed and disappeared down the river, while the fiery raft slowly died out.

Then, suddenly, at the back of the crowd, someone laughed. At first those nearest the offender turned to inflict summary justice, but it was too infectious. Little titters arose here and there, and in a few seconds the natural gaiety of this light-hearted people had prevailed. The whole crowd went into violent hysterics.

NEXT morning the members of a certain club assembled as usual, all talking excitedly of the affair of the night before. Most of them had witnessed it, and all were anxious to discover the practical joker.

"Good little show, wasn't it?" said Peter Grimwood.

"Good!" gasped one member. "It's the most extraordinary thing I ever heard of in my life. And we were just going to suggest that you should discover the author of it. It's the kind of job you like."

Grimwood's ugly face crinkled up into a broad grin.

"He stands before you," was the modest reply.

"You!"

The whole group of men fell back with a gasp of astonishment.

"Do you mean to say that you arranged this thing? But why?"

"All the fault of Rogers," was the calm reply. "He told me I couldn't perpetrate a joke on April Fools' Day which would be talked of all through the year."

"Yes; and then?" they inquired, eagerly.

"Well," he drawled, quietly, "I can only say I did my best. And I really think——"

A SLIPPERY CUSTOMER

By

A. A. IRVINE

Illustrated by
C. E. BROCK, R.I.

A THICK blanket of yellow fog lay over London. Though it was still quite early in the afternoon, the electric lights in the shop of Goldstein and Son, world-famous jewellers and diamond merchants, struck gleaming flashes from the clustered gems in the big glass-fronted show-cases and sparks of multi-coloured fire from the pin in young Mr. Goldstein's tie.

Mr. Samuel Goldstein, the junior partner, posed in what he imagined to be an attitude of well-bred ease, stood gazing with mingled respect and admiration at a young lady on the opposite side of the counter.

There were certainly good reasons for the two emotions which inspired him. The lady seemed likely to prove a good customer; and her type of beauty was the type that appealed to him most strongly. As with a charming smile she leant gracefully towards him in her sable coat and smart black velvet hat, he felt that in spite of the fog time was passing pleasantly. Auburn hair coquettishly bobbed, dark melting eyes, and a pale face in which the mouth made a gash of vivid crimson constituted his ideal of feminine loveliness.

Accustomed though he was to dealing with stars of the social firmament, Romance was not yet dead in the bosom of the junior partner. With the elder Mr. Goldstein the case was different. So far as he was concerned, Romance had long since been outdistanced by Romano's. A good dinner and a good bargain were the only known agencies capable of moving him. Melting brown eyes in a pale oval face would have produced upon the elder Mr. Goldstein no impression whatever. With equal emotion he would have chaffered with milk-white Venus Anadyomene over a diamond tiara, and have priced a sapphire-studded wristwatch for an ancient Briton stained ultramarine with woad. To him it would not in the least have mattered whether his customer's mouth were a vivid crimson or pea-green.

As the lady continued to smile the smirk on the fat, flabby face of the junior partner grew even wider. A thorough little aristocrat, he thought! The kind of girl whose portrait appears in *The Babbler*, in hunting kit or ski-ing costume, with the mystic words "And Friend" tacked on to her name.

Her voice was a deep musical contralto, and her vocabulary that of a fashionable Society maiden—the vocabulary of "Fanchette" of *The Babbler*, or of a child of nine.

Taking up her two purchases, she laid them beside her gold chain-purse, and addressed the infatuated Mr. Samuel.

"I think I'll decide on these. The ruby bangle and the ducky little cigarette-case. And now, do—*do* show me something *really* 'spensive!"

"To purchase, madam?" inquired Mr. Samuel, beamingly.

The lady uttered a pretty little shriek of horror at the mere idea.

"Oh, no-oo! Not to *buy!* I'm 'fraid I can't 'ford to do that. These days we're all so 'straordinarily poor, aren't we? But I *love* seeing pretty things, even if I can't buy them."

The fascinated young man was ready enough to humour her whim. In fact, there was nothing he would not have shown her. Had they chanced to be in the shop, he would willingly have spread out the mines of Golconda for her inspection.

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He reflected for a moment, and then walked over to a large iron safe built into the wall. Setting the combination, he twirled a handle and took out a couple of morocco-leather cases which he brought to where his customer was waiting.

"By rights I ought not to be showing you these!" he announced, with an elephantine attempt at roguishness. "But you won't tell anyone, will you?"

The lady clapped her small gloved hands together, wafting a faint perfume in the direction of the junior partner, whose nasal organ was of a size to do adequate justice to such offerings.

"No! No, indeed I won't, Mr. Goldstein!" she exclaimed, with charming eagerness. "Oh, I *am* so 'cited! *Do* tell me what they are!"

With an air of mystery Mr. Samuel opened one of the cases and displayed a superb collar of diamonds and emeralds.

"We have just finished setting these stones for the Rajah of Bagoda," he observed, importantly. "Several of them are well known. Heirlooms in the family, I understand."

A cry of admiration burst from his customer.

"Oh, but it really is *too* divine!" She heaved a plaintive little sigh. "Lucky, lucky Mrs. Rajah! And now, the other one?"

Mr. Samuel opened the second case.

"These," he said, in the solemn tones of a hierophant exhibiting a sacred relic, "are the Leverden pearls."

"O-ooh! *Not* Lady Ida Leverden's pearl necklace?"

"The same. You know it, madam?"

"'Course I do! Everyone in Town knows it. Isn't it *too* lovely? What do you suppose it's worth?"

The jeweller smiled. "I shouldn't like to say, madam. You see, apart from the size and beauty of the pearls there's the historic interest. It was left with us for re-stringing."

The lady leaned a little farther over the counter, and spoke with her most ingratiating smile.

"Mr. Goldstein, *do* just let me have it on for a minute!" And, as he seemed to hesitate, she bent her head and added: "*You* put it on for me."

With fingers that trembled slightly as they touched the short auburn curls the junior partner snapped the clasp behind the lady's neck and stood watching the effect.

She began at once to thank him. "It *is* nice of you! *Aren't* they lovely? Oh, please let me look at myself in a glass!"

She whirled round excitedly and began examining herself in a small mirror that stood on one of the show-cases. With her back to him, and her hands above the collar of her fur coat, she remained for a moment arranging the necklace to her satisfaction. Then suddenly, with a sharp cry of dismay, she whirled round again.

"O-ooh!" she exclaimed, with a comical look of agitation on her face. "Oh, it's gone!"

The immediate answer to her cry was a weird sound proceeding from Mr. Samuel as he raced round the counter. A hoarse choking noise like the croak of an indisposed raven.

"Gone?" he gasped in bewilderment. "Gone? Where to? What do you mean?"

The lady gurgled with amusement. "It's—it's dropped down," she explained, modestly lowering her eyes as if to enlighten him.

"Dropped down? Where? On the floor?"

"No! Don't be silly! Can't you understand? You must have fastened it badly—and it's slipped down—in here."

She clasped her hands on her neck.

Mr. Samuel breathed a sigh of relief. At any rate, the Leverden necklace was safe! Still, it was rather an awkward predicament. What on earth was he to do?

THE cry and the croak had attracted the attention of Mr. Goldstein senior, who came shuffling out of his office.

"What is the matter, Sam?" he inquired, fussily. "I thought I heard something?"

His son began to explain: "The Leverden pearl necklace——"

"The Leverden pearls! Wh-what has happened to them? You don't mean to say——?" The elder man's voice rose rapidly to a shriek.

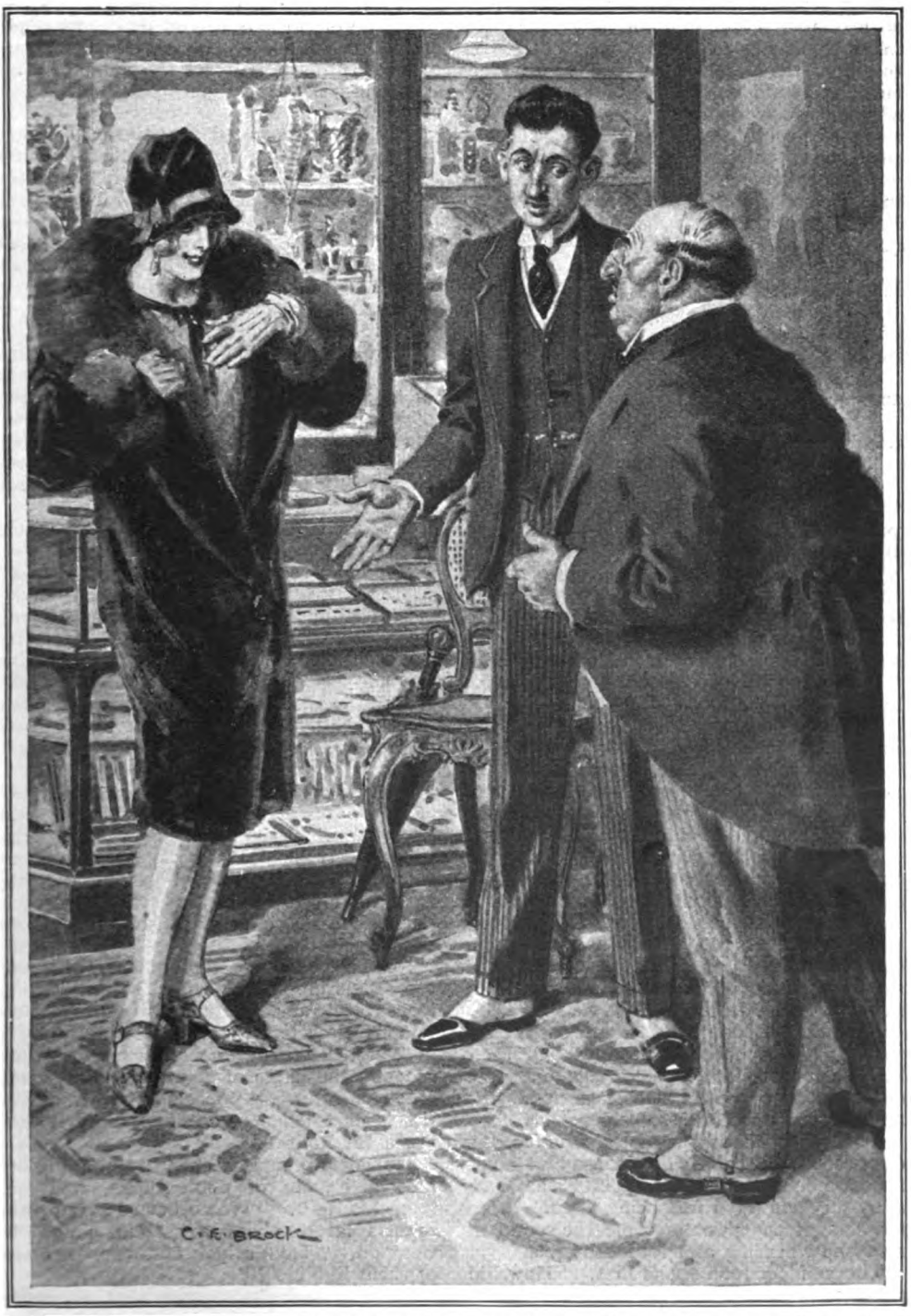
"Oh, it's all right! It's all right!" his son reassured him. "I was only showing them to this lady, and somehow or other they've slipped down inside——"

The lady broke in suavely: "I'm *so* sorry! And really, it's all my fault! The necklace is quite safe, Mr. Goldstein. Your son very kindly allowed me to try it on, and it's gone down inside my dress!" She burst into a peal of laughter. "I can easily retrieve it for you."

But Mr. Goldstein senior was only partially mollified.

"That is all very well; but what are we to do about it?" he demanded, querulously. "You can't—you can't undress in the shop."

"No, of course not! But you can easily send someone with me to my aunt's house in Mayfair to bring the necklace back." Her eyes twinkled at the junior partner. "Perhaps *you* would come?" she suggested.



"Oh, it's all right! It's all right!" his son reassured him. "I was only showing the pearls to this lady, and somehow or other they've slipped down inside——"

The senior partner instantly decided to go himself. A son who was fool enough to allow thousands of pounds' worth of pearls to engulf themselves in a stranger's underclothing would be quite capable of getting himself into worse difficulties. After all, he reflected rapidly, one didn't know who she really was. Supposing she were a swindler with confederates, Sam might be inveigled into accompanying her to some place where he could conveniently be knocked on his silly head——

Still struggling with her amusement, the lady suggested a way out of the difficulty.

" That little room—the one you came out of. It's an office, isn't it ? Couldn't I go in there for a few minutes ? "

Both men were ready to welcome the suggestion.

" Of course, madam, if you don't mind—— ? "

" If it's not too much trouble—— ? "

The lady laughed pleasantly. " Oh, no trouble at all ! *So* stupid of me ! Then, if you'll just wait and—oh, yes, pack up the two things I bought ! "

With a last bewitching smile she passed through the door, which Mr. Goldstein senior closed after her before going back to address a few well-chosen remarks to his son, who began sulkily to tie up the parcel.

Some five minutes later the younger man looked at his watch.

" She ought to be about through by now," he said. " Hadn't you better knock ? "

However, their polite knocking brought no response. Nor was there any better result when both men, now thoroughly alarmed, battered on the door. With a scared glance at his father, Mr. Samuel twisted the handle and pushed vigorously. The door opened six inches and then struck against something solid, which went clattering to the ground. As they burst into the room they saw that it was the heavy walnut-wood revolving chair, which had been moved from in front of the desk.

Wreaths of dank fog were curling in through the open office-window. Of their late customer there was no sign except a discarded fur coat which lay upon the floor trying to look like sable.

With their heads out of the window, the disconsolate firm of Goldstein and Son gazed for a moment distractedly into the dark alley-way some ten feet below them. From the end of the passage came the sound of someone whistling and rolling barrels.

The younger man spoke first. " How did she get down ? "

His father pointed to a water-pipe fastened to the wall. " Must have gone down that. I tell you, it's a put-up job ! She must have known of it before." He exploded angrily.

" It's the fault of these damned schools !—teaching girls to climb and jump like boys ! It's this—this——" he searched his unathletic mind hastily for the name of some modern-girlish pastime—" this hockey ! " he concluded.

His son interrupted angrily :—

" Oh, stop talking that nonsense, can't you, and get to the telephone ! Ring up the nearest police-station. I'll go round to the back."

At the end of the yard he found a stout man rolling a barrel towards a cellar-opening. The stout man contemplated him with beery interest when questioned as to whether he had noticed anyone pass.

" In this 'ere blinkin' fog," he declared with geniality, after an exasperating amount of consideration, " I couldn't notice a pot o' porter, not if it was under me nose ! " He scratched his head reflectively. " No, there's been no one 'ere—exceptin' a young woman a few minutes ago. She give my mate, Jim, a ' Good afternoon '——"

" Oh, she did, did she ? " snarled the junior partner, bitterly, as he turned away. " I suppose she didn't give him a pearl necklace worth fifty thousand pounds ? "

The stout man, who disapproved of all badinage except his own, swayed forward truculently. " 'Ere ! " he exclaimed. " 'Ere, guv'nor——! "

But the distraught worshipper of female beauty had vanished to join his frenzied parent at the telephone.

HALF an hour later the firm of Goldstein was pouring its woes into the large but sympathetic ears of Superintendent Corder. The sympathy, however, became less pronounced when, at the conclusion of the recital, both partners demanded an immediate solution of the problem.

" If I were Mr. Watson-Holmes," observed the Superintendent, with sarcastic but inaccurate reference to the world's most famous detective, " I should just take a look at the heel of your left boot and then tell you the name of the thief. But, being only an ordinary policeman—with a lifetime's experience of criminals—my powers are a bit limited."

He got up and fetched from a pigeon-hole a bundle of photographs, and laid it on his desk. " We've been having some reports lately about a certain gang," he went on. " Take a look at these. Are any of them like her ? "

Father and son searched feverishly through the collection ; and then, with a howl of recognition, Mr. Samuel pounced on one of the portraits, and stared at it with his eyes bulging.

"Why," he cried, "it's exactly like——! But it's—it's——!"

"Yes, I know it is," the Superintendent cut in with a laugh. "And there's no need to go shouting about it. It's *her* right enough! One of their little dodges is to get in with the servants. We shall probably send a man down to Leverden Towers; and if he finds out anything, you'll hear from us."

THE consternation caused at Leverden Towers by the loss of the necklace can well be imagined. It was a family heirloom, and, like all self-respecting family heirlooms, had a history of murders, suicides, and sundry minor catastrophes attached to it of which it had every reason to be proud. However, no disaster comparable with the present one had befallen it since the time when young Sir Gervase Leverden, a hundred years before, had been obliged to part with it temporarily after forty-eight consecutive hours spent at the gaming-tables. On that occasion, it may be noted, Ambrose Pottyfoot, the old family retainer, had nobly come to his young master's assistance with his life's savings (banked in an old sock), coupled with an offer of his services, without any wages, for the remainder of his existence. Young Sir Gervase, a firm believer in co-operation between master and servant, had gracefully accepted the offer, which had, indeed, enabled him to pass another pleasant half-hour at the gaming-tables.

The times have changed, and it may be remarked in passing that no such pecuniary aid had, so far, been proffered by Mr. Gunning, the present incumbent of the post of butler at the Towers. Indeed, if questioned, Mr. Gunning would have attached to the word "retainer" a shade of meaning quite different from that attributed to it by his Pottyfootling predecessor. And any suggestion that he should spend his declining years in service without adequate remuneration would undoubtedly have hastened the attack of apoplexy to which Albert, the page-boy, at times looked forward with pleasurable anticipation.

The disconsolate firm of Goldstein and Son gazed distractedly into the alley-way some ten feet below them.

Naturally, the tragic happenings at the emporium of Goldstein and Son formed the chief topic of conversation between Lady Ida Leverden and her friend Angela Dawkins as they sat at tea in the purple boudoir one afternoon a few days after the events above related.

"And there's really no clue to the thief?" inquired Miss Dawkins.

"None whatever," replied her ladyship, bitterly. "Of course, the police think they have one. But, then, they always think that!"

"And what has Goldstein to say about it?"

Lady Ida's good-humoured aristocratic face grew stern as she answered:—

"I believe he'll go mad soon; and I'm sure he deserves to! He came down here in the most terrible state, and told me a long rigmarole. But I was so upset, and so angry with him for his inexcusable carelessness, that I couldn't understand half of it. According to his absurd story some young woman suddenly walked into the shop during a fog, and after completely undressing put on the necklace and got out of the window. Now, I ask you, does that sound like a thing that could possibly happen?"

"Most improbable, I should say," was her friend's comment. "Though nowadays, of course, young women do behave in the most extraordinary fashion! You don't think," she continued, hinting darkly, "that Goldstein has stolen the necklace himself?"

Lady Ida considered the proposition. "My dear, I don't really know what to think. It's quite possible. One's always

Mademoiselle entered the room, and stood for a

reading of these things; heads of firms going bankrupt, and keeping up two establishments, and so on."

She leaned forward and touched the bell. As a footman appeared with what seemed to be the most exemplary promptitude, she added:—

"Take away tea—er—Johnson."

When the door closed behind his broad livery-clad back, Lady Ida turned to her companion, and in a voice hushed with mystery whispered:—

"He's a detective!"

Miss Dawkins bounded on her chair.

"*A detective?*"

"A man from Scotland Yard. They seem to think that one of the servants may know something; though what will happen if he starts searching Gunning's box—or boxes; I dare say he has several—I cannot imagine."

WHILE the two ladies continued their discussion of the problem, Johnson, the new footman, at tea in the servants' hall, was rapidly ingratiating himself with the Leverden domestic staff.

Scotland Yard knows how to choose and

train its men; and, on the whole, the modern sleuth has an interesting, if variegated, time. It is no longer necessary for him to lurk about disguised as Jonathan Wild, armed with a bludgeon and a dark lantern. With his eyes and ears at full cock, he takes his ease in the palm-decked lounge of the Waldorf-Astoria; he shares your cabin on a *dahabeeyah* up the Nile; he

moment surveying the company.

frolics, at someone else's expense, through the cherry orchards of Japan.

And there is no escaping him! Let us say that, having made away with some particularly obnoxious relative, you go for a change of air down a coal-mine. There, lying on his stomach, chipping at the block of coal next to yours, you will find the sleuth. Hastily making your escape from the coal-mine, you go up in an aeroplane; and after the customary crash kindly hands help you to extinguish your blazing trousers. They are the kindly hands of the sleuth. It is his mission in life to be all things to all men.

Mr. Johnson was fulfilling his mission with complete success. His good looks and pleasant manners had already captivated the female portion of the staff. With becoming deference and appreciation he had applauded the *contes* of Mr. Gunning, chestnuts of the white-whiskered variety, ancient and crusted as the port of the "old retainer." He had even ventured on a story or two of his own.

Needless to say, it was not long before he was being regaled with the below-stairs version of the Episode Goldstein. And it lacked nothing in interest from the fact that it had been originally imported by Mademoiselle, her ladyship's maid, and had been subsequently added to and improved upon by Mrs. Fisher, the housekeeper.

It appeared that the necklace had been lent for the evening by the younger Mr. Goldstein to a lady friend who was starring in *revue*. While she was engaged in changing her costume, a masked man had broken into her dressing-room, torn the ornament off her neck, and disappeared through a window. The lady, though only partially clothed, had most pluckily followed the marauder for some distance down a water-pipe; and then, losing her hold, had fallen forty feet into a backyard, sustaining the most frightful injuries.

"But you ought to hear Ma'amzelle tell it!" concluded Mrs. Fisher.

"I should like to very much," Mr. Johnson responded. "When are we to have the pleasure of seeing her?"

"I expect she's upstairs with my lady. But she ought to be down any minute. Ah, here she is!"

Mademoiselle entered the room, and stood for a moment surveying the company. In her severe black dress with the trim white collar and cuffs, her dark hair parted in the middle and drawn back into a not unbecoming knot, she was singularly unlike the radiant, auburn-tressed vision who, a few days before, had dazzled the eyes of the junior partner.

The new footman was leaning forward in his chair, his keen grey eyes eagerly studying her face.

Then, his mind made up, he rose quickly with a grim smile, and addressed her in these amazing words:—

"Come along, Tommy! You're the man I want! My word, you have got a nerve! But I know you've the sense to come quiet."

A Short Suit

By

LYNN DOYLE

Illustrated by
L. G. ILLINGWORTH

IT was just exactly at twenty minutes past seven, said Mr. Patrick Murphy, that my wife's aunt came into the kitchen of her house in Belfast—— But I had better go back to the beginnin' of the whole business.

My wife's aunt, Mrs. McPeake, is married on a fitter in the Queen's Island in Belfast, an' they have a very snug wee house in Scullen Street.

About last October they invited the wife up to stay with them. While she was on the visit here doesn't a letter come to Mrs. McPeake from her brother Sam, askin' if she could give him a bed for the night before Belfast fair. Sam has a nice wee farm in the Free State, about three mile over the Border; an' he had two or three good shorthorn bullocks that he thought he'd do better with if he fetched them up to Belfast.

It was a very tight fit for the McPeakes, I may tell you, puttin' up Sam; for their house isn't big; but by dint of lettin' the kitchen fire out early, an' makin' a bed for the twins on the top of the range, they managed to fix up a corner for him.

They were all sittin' in the parlour that evenin', talkin', as well as they could for the noise (for Sam had bought the children a pennyworth of sweets, an' that left one sweet short among them), when Joe McPeake lifts up the evenin' paper.

"Hold on," sez he, "till I read you a good one. Keep quiet, children! It's about some old fellow from the County Meath. He bought a pair of trousers in Belfast, an' didn't declare them as he was passin' through the Customs; an' what do you think they fined him? A hundred pounds; that's all! What's wrong, Sam?" sez he to his brother-in-law.

"Oh, my Father," sez Sam, lettin' a most lamentable groan out of him, "an' didn't I buy a new suit of clothes here in Belfast this very evenin'?"

"How much did it cost you?" sez McPeake.

"Seven pounds I paid for it," sez Sam; "aye, seven good pounds. An' now I suppose I be to pay another pound duty."

"Twenty-one shillin's," sez McPeake. "There's fifteen per cent. duty, my boy. I'd risk smugglin' it through, if I was you."

"Is it risk a fine of a hundred pounds?" sez Sam. "No fear of me. D——n the Free State," sez he, very bitter. "I wish to Heavens I had supported Carson."

"I'll tell you what you'll do, then," sez McPeake, winkin' at the wife (for the both of them knew Sam was no way rash); "wear the new suit, an' leave that one you have on you behind. It'll make me a good boiler-suit."

"Boiler-suit, indeed," sez Sam. "You'll make no boiler-suit of it. It's a d——d sight better nor your Sunday clothes. But what the devil am I to do?"

"Pay the duty," sez McPeake. "That's the simple way out of it."

"What! Is it hand over one pound to them bloodsuckers? Never!" sez Sam. "I'd pay the hundred pounds first—I don't mean that," sez he; "but I won't pay one shillin' of duty if I can help it. Have none of yez any brains, to give me a plan?"

Now my wee wife, Molly, has the name of bein' very lucky; but she had an unfortunate notion this time.

"Uncle Sam," sez she, "sure the railroad runs through your farm? What's to hinder you throwing the parcel into the field in front of the house as the train goes past to-morrow evenin'? It'll be near dusk."

"Tck, tck, tck," sez Sam, lookin' at her all vexed. "To think that the duty has been on clothes these two years, an' I never hit on that notion of yours before. I might have smuggled in as much both years as would ha' paid the rent. But it's never too late to mend. I'll make a start with the suit. Susan," sez he, "ye haven't by any chance a piece of strong brown paper you could wrap up the suit in? There's little better than tissue paper on it now; and it might burst."

"Aye, have I," sez the sister; "an' a dirty crumpled oul' piece it is, the very thing for you. Ye don't want too swanky a parcel in the train, in case there'd be some fly boys about, spottin' for the Customs. Where's the suit?"

"It's in the hall," sez Sam.

"All right," sez the sister. "I'll go an' parcel it up now."

"Better let me do it," sez McPeake. "These children'll have the house down."

"I'll do it myself," sez she. "Maybe ye can use a hammer; but I never seen the man yet was much use with paper an' string."

But in the middle of the job the two children that had only one sweet between them, an' was suckin' it time about, fell out, an' in the tussle the youngest swallowed the sweet holus-bolus. The mother had to run up the stairs hot-foot, first to save the one child from chokin' an' then to keep the other one from massacrin' it for boltin' the sweet; an' when she came down the second time, with the parcel in her hand, she allowed that she could ha' made it untidier if she hadn't been so flustered. But all the rest said she had made a great job of the parcel, an' that nobody would ever dream there was a new suit in it.

Molly told me after she came home that when Sam went off to the station the next afternoon you'd ha' thought it was a parcel of cotton waste he had under his arm; an' there's no doubt at all he'd ha' passed safe through the Customs if he'd let well alone.

But when he got into the carriage here was three or four cattle-dealin' men that he knew. As soon as the train was started one of them out with a pack of cards an' proposed a hand of Nap, an' Sam was asked would he join in? You might be surprised at him doin' it; but he was one of them men that never go three unless they have a Nap hand, an' live on other people's wreckage; so he wasn't afeared to play in any company.

The game wasn't right started till a stout little butt of a man with a blue serge suit on him, an' a very wise expression of countenance, riz out of the opposite corner an' sat himself down at Sam's elbow. As the game went on he gave Sam advice now an' then about calling, an' it was always good advice. Twice Sam, at his instigation, took the top card an' went Nap, though the cold sweat was runnin' down his back as he did it; an' twice he won; an' he began to see that the little man was just as wise as he looked.

Time run by, an' they all began to chat between deals, an' presently the talk came round to smugglin'; an' one an' another begun to boast how he'd got stuff through the Customs. Sam very soon seen that it

"I won't pay one shillin' of duty if I can help it. Have none of yez any brains, to give me a plan?"

was an easy business, after all, an' was inclined to be sorry he hadn't bought an overcoat as well. Then some of the boys started to tell about how cute the Customs people was gettin', an' how the Free State was payin' their army out of Customs fines alone; an' Sam's heart went down intil his boots, an' he wished to Heavens he had bought his new suit on his own side of the Border.

Up till now he had said nothin' about his smugglin' venture, bein' of a very cautious turn of mind. Besides that, he'd been a trifle shy of the wise-lookin' little man; for he thought his blue serge suit had a very great look of an old uniform about it; an' he misdoubted him. However, as the stories of people bein' caught went from bad to worse, he could thole no longer, but told his plan for throwin' the new suit out of the train. The other card-players allowed that it was a first-class notion; but the wise-lookin' little man shook his head very weighty.

"It was a good plan a month ago, that," sez he, "but it's no use now."

"How?" sez they all, lookin' at him open-mouthed.

"Well," sez he, "I don't know whether the Customs people has wind of it yet or not; but I do know that every servant-boy along the railway line within five miles of the Border is up to it. They lie in wait for the trains; an' now some of them is goin' about swankier nor their masters, with the hats, an' overcoats, an' boots, an' suits of clothes they're pickin' up near-hand every night."

"Do you tell me that?" sez one of the card-players.

"I do tell you that," sez the little man. "An' I know. I threw as nice a tweed overcoat out of the train three weeks ago as you'd wish to see; an' now my own first ploughman has been out to church these two Sundays wearin' it. God forgive me, I can't say my prayers for lookin' at him. An' I daren't say Boo! about it for fear it would cost me the price of a ten-acre field in a fine."

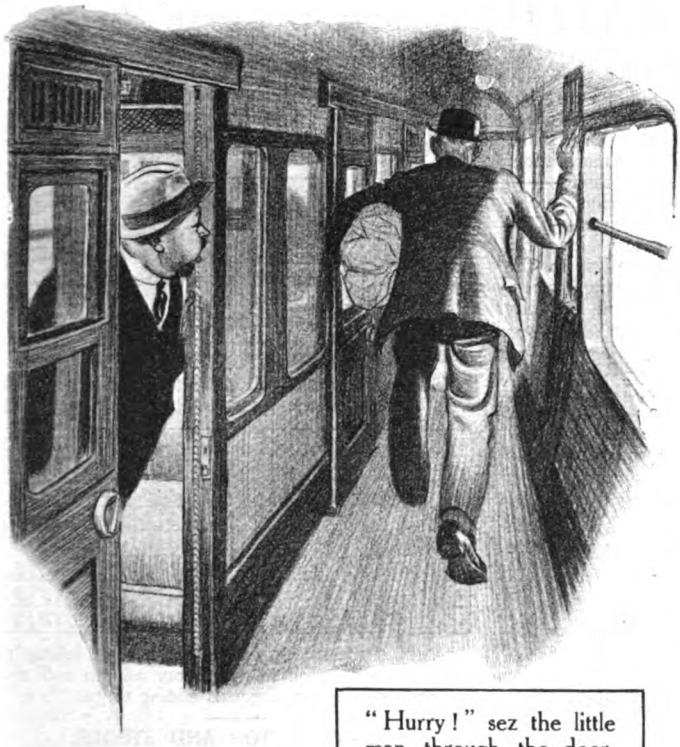
"Bless my soul," sez Sam, "this is terrible altogether. I had a right to make my old suit do another year, so I had. Should I pay the duty, do you think?" sez he, pickin' up his cards.

"Take the top card an' go Nap on the double, first," sez the little man, lookin' at his hand. "In the meantime I'll be thinkin' the matter out."

So Sam went Nap on the double, a thing he'd never done in his life before, an' got it, an' lifted eight shillin's in one scoop. After that he was prepared to back the little man again' King Solomon, an' ready to do anythin' he told him short of throwin' himself out on the railway line with the suit on him.

"I have it!" sez the little man, as the cards were bein' dealt out again. "Change into the new suit in the lavatory, an' throw

As the game went on the little man gave Sam advice.



"Hurry!" sez the little man through the door.

the old one out instead. They never charge you duty on a suit you're wearin'. An' if anybody does spot your old suit as it falls," sez he, in a very matter-of-fact tone, "they'll hardly bother to pick it up. Hurry, though," sez he, payin' no attention to the look Sam gave him. "You've only one more station to go."

But Sam had seen the deal by now, an' here didn't he hold the ace, king, an' queen of hearts, an' a small one? He held up the cards to the little man, an' his hand was tremblin'.

"Have I time?" sez he. "It's a sure four."

"Blethers with your four," sez the wee man, near as excited. "Follow your luck. Take the top card, an' go Nap again."

So Sam lifted the top card, an' it was a heart. Four shillin's he took this time; an' he was that pleased about all the money he had won that he'd ha' died sooner than spend a penny of it on duty.

"Holy Moses!" cries the little man, lookin' at his watch, "you've left yourself bare time. Off with that old suit, an' bundle it into a parcel. I'll throw it out for you, an' you can put on the new suit at your leisure. The first house to the right past Ballindoyle Station, you said?"

"Yes, yes," splutters Sam, fumblin' on the rack for the new suit, "the field with the tarred wooden shed in it." An' off he dashes for the lavatory.

"Hurry!" sez the little man through the door. "We're not far from Ballindoyle now."

Sam tore the old suit off him, pulled the paper off the new suit, an' wrapped up the old one as well as he could, with the cold an' the splutter he was in.

"Hurry! Hurry!" sez the little man, outside.

Sam opened the door and pushed the parcel into his arms. The little man got to the nearest window just in time to throw it out.

That would be about twenty-one minutes past seven; for the Dublin train is due to pass Ballindoyle Station at twenty past.

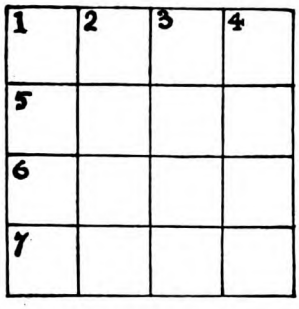
AN' as I told you at the beginnin', it was just at twenty minutes past seven that my wife's aunt came into the kitchen of her house in Belfast.

"Would you believe it, Molly?" sez she to my wife, that was sittin' at the range fire, warmin' her shins. "Would you believe it, but I forgot to put in the trousers of Sam's new suit!"

PERPLEXITIES.

— By —
HENRY E. DUDENEY.

847.—DANGER SIGNAL PUZZLE.



Across:—(1) Interruption. (5) Expression. (6) Enumeration. (7) A chest —— protector.

Down: — The letters are the blanks in the following words, inserted in their proper order:—(1) – E – – E R –, (2) – R – P – C – L, (3) G – – – E – OOT, (4) – OC – E – – D.

This interesting little cross-word puzzle was sent to me by a correspondent (V). The square contains good advice.

848.—A QUEER NUMBER.

A NUMBER of three digits read from left to right and from right to left or upside down is in every case a square. What is the number?

849.—AN OLD ENIGMA.

HERE is an old enigma by Mrs. Barbauld which is worth preserving:—

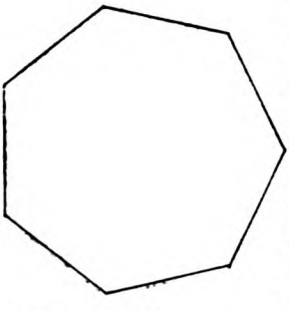
We are little airy creatures,
All of different voice and features;
One of us in glass is set
And a second found in jet;
One of us is cased in tin,
And the fourth a box within;
If the fifth you would pursue
It can never fly from you.

850.—THE MOTOR-CAR MAKER'S PROFIT.

A MAN sold a motor-car for £459, gaining a profit thereby of just as many pounds per cent. as there were pounds in the prime cost of the car. What was the prime cost?

851.—HEPTAGON AND SQUARE.

WE have discussed from time to time the dissection of various regular figures into pieces that will form a square. We have shown that the equilateral triangle may be transformed in 4 pieces, the pentagon in 6 pieces, the hexagon in 5 pieces, the octagon in 5 pieces, none of these requiring a piece to be turned over. In every case these are believed to be the fewest possible pieces. At any rate, they, for the present, hold the record, for you can rarely be absolutely sure in these cases that you have really got down to bed-rock. Now it will be seen that we have dropped the heptagon, which is a very difficult case. For a long time my record was 12 pieces, but I would not publish it because I was confident that it might be beaten. This was done a short time ago by the Rev. C. Clarke, who found an ingenious method in 11. But this has quite recently been beaten by Mr. George Wotherspoon, who sends me a solution in as few as 10 pieces. This I will give next month. In the meantime the reader may like to try to solve it in 9 pieces.



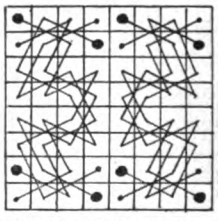
Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

842.—THE SHOCK.

WHAT is wrong about the dream story is the obvious fact that, as the dreamer never awoke from his dream, it is impossible that anything could be known about it. The story must, therefore, be a pure invention.

843.—THE EIGHT KNIGHTS MAGIC.

THE first diagram will show the seven moves of each knight and the second diagram the successive

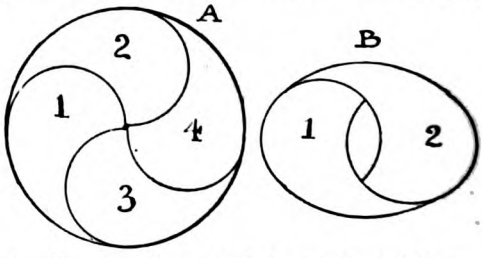


1	2	7	8	1	2	7	8
8	7	2	1	8	7	2	1
3	6	5	4	5	4	3	6
6	3	4	5	4	5	6	3
3	6	5	4	5	4	3	6
6	3	4	5	4	5	6	3
1	2	7	8	1	2	7	8
8	7	2	1	8	7	2	1

numbers of the moves, calling the original square 1, forming a magic square with every column and row and each of the two diagonals adding to 36.

844.—TABLE-TOP AND STOOLS.

FIG. A shows the circle divided into four equal pieces forming the Great Monad, and in Fig. B we have two pieces re-assembled to form one of the two stools,



the other stool being similarly constructed from 3 and 4. Unfortunately the hand-holes are across instead of lengthways, but no condition is broken.

845.—FIND THE TRIANGLE.

THE sides of the triangle are 13, 14, and 15. Making 14 the base, the height is 12 and the area 84. There is an infinite number of rational triangles composed of three consecutive numbers like 3, 4, and 5, and 13, 14, and 15, but there is no other case in which the height will comply with our conditions.

846.—ELIZA'S SURNAME.

OBVIOUSLY we have to take into consideration the three penny pencils, and the puzzle cannot be solved without doing so. Then every man spends (on shares) 251d. more than his wife. Eliza's surname must have been Robinson, and the transactions as follows:—

Brown 21; Mrs. Brown (Mary) 71.
Smith 49; Mrs Smith (Jane) 169.
Robinson 289: Mrs. Robinson (Eliza) 1001

HE STORY OF
VILLIAM" By P. G. WODEHOUSE

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Here we are!

Fruit and Nut Chocolate

Delicious plain chocolate, mixed with juicy raisins and crisp almonds!

BelgraveChocolate

Perfectly plain, plainly perfect—a chocolate quite out of the ordinary!

Valencia Chocolate

Milk chocolate made even more delightful with fruity raisins and choicest almonds!

Milk Chocolate

Made with fresh milk from English farms.

6D
A CARTET

Also in ½ lb. blocks:
Fruit and Nut 1/-
Belgrave Choc. 1/-
Milk Choc. 1/-
Valencia Choc. 1/2

CA22

THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for May, 1927.

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Frontispiece: Bannister knocked over table and chair and seized the first man by his tunic, pushing his pistol into his stomach. Instantly all was confusion.

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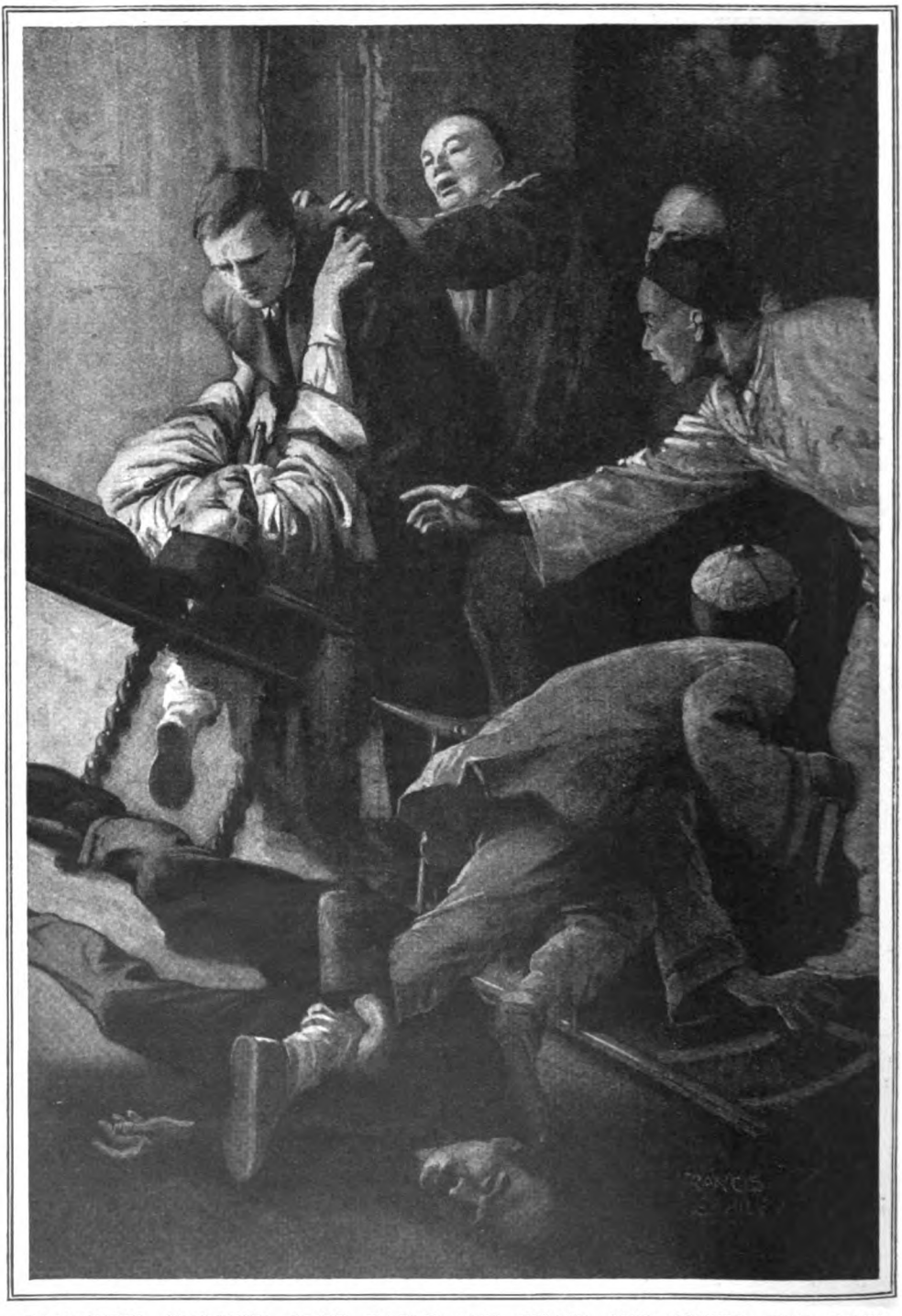
To face back of Frontispiece.

The STRAND MAGAZINE

MAY, 1927.



BANNISTER KNOCKED OVER TABLE AND CHAIR AND SEIZED THE FIRST MAN BY HIS TUNIC, PUSHING HIS PISTOL INTO HIS STOMACH. INSTANTLY ALL WAS CONFUSION.

(See page 432.)

THESE THRILLING ARTICLES ARE FACT—NOT FICTION.

Cases from My Crime-Book

By

H. ASHTON-WOLFE

(Interpreter at the Criminal Courts.)

Illustrated by
F. E. HILEY

AUTHOR'S NOTE

My profession as interpreter has brought me constantly in touch with the great criminal investigation centres of the world, and I have many times become intimate with some of the more interesting criminals of modern times.

The stories which I have selected for this series can be found in the official records, only one or two details having been rearranged in order to avoid giving pain and reopening old wounds.

I have myself taken part either in the investigation or the final trials of the criminals. Several of the cases I have specially selected because of the ingenuity displayed both by the law-breakers and by the investigators.

No II. THE SUICIDE ROOM

IN this article I am about to relate, for the first time, the story of a series of amazing crimes which were committed during the brief career of that cunning Oriental, Hanoi Shan. Only once in a hundred years does it happen that such a monster as this Asiatic is born, and such misdeeds as his are seldom described—because they are seldom found out. Nor would Hanoi Shan have been unmasked but for the fact that a greater mind than his chanced to be fighting for law and order—that of Dr. Bertillon, the greatest of all scientific detectives, justly celebrated as the inventor of the anthropometrical and the finger-print system.

It is many years ago now. But those who wish to verify the story I am about to tell will find a brief outline in the "Compte rendu des procès en Correctionnelle." Paris edition of the Chronique des Tribunaux, 1907–1908.

The weird methods used by Hanoi Shan savour of Edgar Allan Poe, I know; fortunately the records are there.

Many will certainly remember the tremendous sensation caused in the autumn of 1906 by the sudden epidemic of strange, inexplicable deaths which occurred both in London and in Paris, and which were only little by little proved to have been due to the machinations of a criminal organization

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of which the head was an Oriental named Hanoi Shan—soon nicknamed by Parisians "L'Araignée" ("The Spider"). He had once been governor of a province in Tonkin China, and was then a tall, fine, athletic man of kindly and upright character.

One day, when he was assisting at the capture of wild elephants which were being driven into a vast enclosure by specially trained tame animals, one of the wild ones suddenly turned and charged the beast on which Hanoi Shan was sitting. He was thrown from the howdah to the ground. Before any of his men could come to his assistance the mad elephant picked him up and, whirling him round and round, in ungovernable rage, smashed him against a tree. From that terrible shock Hanoi Shan had never recovered.

Crushed and mangled in dreadful fashion, he lingered for months in a French hospital at Saigon. The French surgeons did all they could, but little hope of saving his life was entertained. Nevertheless, he did not die. But when at last he left the hospital he had become a twisted, deformed monster—with crooked spine and shortened legs. His once amiable nature had changed as much. An evil smile flickered ever round his thin, flexible lips, and in a very short time his cruelty and ruthless disregard for human life became proverbial.

At last there had come a native uprising. He had been deposed, his lands confiscated and his palace burned. Hanoi Shan escaped to a French gunboat, closely pursued by a furious mob. He had then come to Paris, where he hoped to find a surgeon capable of straightening his injured spine. His quest was doomed to failure. No doctor would risk the operation. With rage and hatred in his heart and insanity slowly eating into his brain, Hanoi Shan had disappeared, only to reappear as the leader of a terrible organization of criminals. His methods were unique, for they combined the cunning and ferocity of a madman with the knowledge and wisdom of the East. Hanoi Shan had been noted in Tonkin China as a student of occultism, hypnotism, and black magic. He was nicknamed "L'Araignée"—because like a spider he wove cunning webs, and with the patience of a spider waited hidden and unseen until his victim was caught. Like a spider, too, his long arms and tapering hands were constantly moving, grasping and weaving invisible threads, while his mouth in moments of excitement quivered and twisted like the mandibles of that insect.

Strange and horrible were the crimes attributed to his evil plotting. None was so weird, however, as the series of deaths which took place at the Hotel d'Amsterdam. For here it was not so much the desire for gain as the love of cruelty which prompted Hanoi Shan to spread his net. Diamonds especially attracted him, and it is thought that this hotel first came under his notice because diamond dealers from Holland often stayed there.

The Hotel d'Amsterdam in the Rue Lhomond is a little eighteenth-century house, well known to commercial travellers, who prefer the peace and quiet of its comfortable, old-fashioned rooms and its plain bourgeois fare to the noisy, glittering palace hotels of the boulevards. It was much frequented by diamond merchants from Antwerp and Amsterdam, probably because the landlord, Mynheer Van der Velde, was himself a Dutchman and a former lapidary. Madame Celestine, a buxom Frenchwoman, was for many years chief cook in the hotel. When her master died, leaving her a comfortable sum, she had taken over the business and shortly after married Mynheer Van der Velde, who was a regular guest there, and constantly travelled back and forth between Paris and Antwerp with precious stones. After the wedding he had settled down to a lazy life, well content to let his wife manage the business whilst he smoked long black cigars and drank Schiedam from morning till night.

For several years the business had prospered in spite of the surly ways and black looks of the husband, whose temper married life appeared to have soured, and whose only recreation was a daily walk down the Rue de la Paix, where he feasted his eyes for hours on the glittering displays in the jewellers' windows.

THEN, abruptly, the hotel had gained an unpleasant notoriety.

An Englishman—just arrived from South Africa—who carried a large number of diamonds, cut and uncut, in all his pockets, as though they were pebbles, had taken room No. 14, a large, handsome bedroom on the third floor, with two windows looking on to the street. He arrived on the Wednesday. Since he spoke no French he spent most of his time lounging in the smoking-room and talking Cape Dutch to the landlord. Several times he had spread out his collection of stones before the fascinated eyes of Mynheer Van der Velde, who for once appeared to have dropped his taciturn habits.

On the Friday evening Culvert, the South African, had retired early. There were at that time no other guests living on the third floor. When, on the Saturday morning, the waiter carried the usual coffee and rolls to No. 14 he found the door locked and received no answer to his repeated knocking.

Alarmed and vaguely sensing disaster, Madame had then gone upstairs, and since the key was in the lock, she pushed this out with a hairpin and unlocked the door with her master-key. At the terrible sight which awaited her she screamed shrilly, and then without entering the room rushed downstairs to the telephone and summoned the police. Fortunately the local police-station was not far away. The Commissaire, Monsieur Maupert, arrived almost at once. Trembling and shaking, Madame had conducted him upstairs, unable to say more than, "He is dead! He is dead!"

It was true! The Englishman was discovered hanging from a huge ancient iron hook—cemented into the wall—to which the curtain pole was fixed. The rope by which he was suspended was the cord used to loop back the heavy curtains. The face of the dead man was blue and swollen; his eyes were wide open and fixed in a dreadful unseeing stare on the wall opposite to him, against which stood the bed. The expression of the face was that of a man who had died from the shock of some nameless horror. Even the hardened Commissaire turned his head away with a shudder. Yet the man's death was obviously due to suicide. More—his desire to die must have been imperative, for his legs were doubled up under him, to prevent them from touching the ground. The hook was low and the cord long enough to have enabled the man to avoid strangulation by simply standing upright.

"*Nom d'un chien*," said the policeman who accompanied the Commissaire. "He had will-power, that one. I should have put my feet down when I felt myself choking."

No diamonds of any description were found either in Culvert's pockets or in his trunk. The doctor who was called agreed with the Commissaire that no other explanation but suicide was possible.

TWO weeks had passed and the tragedy was almost forgotten when a friend of Madame Celestine, a Frenchman this time, was discovered under exactly similar conditions. No. 14 had been occupied two days by a traveller in precious stones. Nothing had been said to him about the tragedy, but on Friday morning he had learned of it from a fellow-countryman, just arrived, who was staying at the hotel when it occurred. He had immediately insisted on moving into another room. Since the hotel was full, Madame had given him the room of her friend, Monsieur Valdagne, which was on the second floor; and the latter, in order to oblige Madame, had taken No. 14. On the Saturday morning he was found hanging from the same hook, a piece of cord from the curtains around his neck—his legs doubled up under him and almost touching the floor. The same awful expression was on his face as that which had distorted the features of Culvert.

"A strange proof of the power of suggestion," the doctor said when he examined him.

"It is like the desire one feels to jump from a high window or to throw oneself under a heavy vehicle. He knew of the death of that other one—*et voilà*—he had to try it."

Suicide was the opinion of the Commissaire also—but he nevertheless examined the room very carefully, and even tapped the walls. That day nearly all the guests left the hotel; Madame Celestine was in despair.

"I am ruined," she cried, wringing her hands. "Ruined—no more travellers will come here now. Oh, I will give a hundred francs if anyone will spend the night in that room—someone who is not mad—who will not want to kill himself."

During the day the sergeant of police, who had again accompanied the inspector, came to see her. After shuffling his feet and looking foolish for a moment, he said:—

"I am a poor man, Madame, but I am an old soldier also—I served for ten years in the Zouaves in Africa. I am not afraid of ghosts or devils. I will stay the

The Hotel d'Amsterdam in the Rue Lhomond. In the shadow on the left was the Chinese curio dealer's shop.

night in your room No. 14 for a hundred francs."

Madame kissed him on both cheeks and called him "Mon brave" and "Mon sauveur," and the matter was arranged. Mynheer merely shook his head and drank another glass of gin; since the tragedies he had done nothing else.

Poor Madame Celestine slept very little that night. Five times she went and listened outside the door, but was reassured by a loud and healthy snore.

In the morning the *agent* drank his coffee with gusto and thumped the table heartily. "*Bon Dieu!*" he exclaimed, "I wish I could earn a hundred francs as easily every day. A soft bed, a grand breakfast, and money besides!"

The news quickly spread in the neighbourhood that someone had spent the night in No. 14 and was still alive. But the superstitious crones shook their heads.

"Yes," they said, "to-day is only Thursday—let him spend Friday night there and come out alive, and we shall see. Friday—the evil day—that is when the ghost in No. 14 puts the idea of dying into the head of the fool who would sleep there."

"I will shut the room and have the door and windows screwed up," said Madame Celestine. "Nothing has ever happened in my other rooms, and I have been here twenty years."

"It is the ghost of that mad Englishman," replied the gossips. "His spirit haunts that room now. If you shut it up, it will go to another room. Better sell the hotel and leave."

A Chinaman named Li Hang Foo, who kept a curio shop next door and sometimes bought and sold diamonds, even made her an offer for the hotel—but Madame Van der Velde was stubborn. Putting on a shawl, she ran to the police-station. Cassoute, the courageous policeman who had spent a night in No. 14, was on duty.

"Will you spend Friday night in the same room?" she asked him, sobbing. "I will pay you another hundred francs."

Cassoute slapped his thigh with glee.

"Yes, madame, and as many more nights as you wish—at the same price." So it was arranged. A copious supper and a bottle of special wine was taken up to the old Zouave, who was in great good humour over what he called his luck—his "*aubaine*."

Poor fellow, he was found dead under exactly similar conditions the next morning. Dead—hanging from the ancient hook—the silken curtain rope round his neck and his knees bent—with feet almost touching the floor! The same ghastly expression of terror twisted his mouth into a dreadful grin.

Now the papers raised a hue and cry. A haunted room in the heart of Paris! "The suicide room," it was at once called. Again a careful search was made—but in vain. No violence, no foul play, had caused those deaths. It was an evil atmosphere, an obsession that seized on all who slept in that chamber. Several papers offered rewards for anyone giving the solution to the mystery. The case of the *Marie Celeste* and other instances of mysterious occult happenings were cited. For a whole week Paris talked of nothing else but this obscure hotel. Psychic mediums flocked to the scene and tried to commune with the spirit or the evil influence. Then came fresh sensations: a bank manager had absconded, a political crisis filled all the available space in the papers, and the matter was forgotten by the fickle public.

BUT Ricardo Garibaldi, a young medical student, poor and friendless, remembered that the rewards had not been revoked.

One morning he called to see the once buxom Madame Celestine, now pale and listless and short of temper. In halting words he asked for permission to investigate the mystery. At first she would not listen to him. Then, because he insisted earnestly that he had a theory, she sent him to the Commissaire.

"He has the key of the room now," she said. "He has forbidden that anyone shall enter. You must obtain his consent."

This, after much argument and pleading, the young man obtained. The Commissaire insisted, however, that certain precautions should be taken. The young fellow was first examined by a doctor, who pronounced him strong and healthy. During the day a telephone was also installed in No. 14. This was to call the Commissaire instantly, if need arose. Strict orders were given to the exchange that even if the receiver were merely lifted connection should be made and the bell in the Commissaire's office was to ring at once. He would be ready at any time to rush to the sinister room. Should he be out, one of his *agents* would come. The young man smiled at these precautions. "There will be no need, Monsieur. I have a theory; and no desire whatever to hang myself. With the money the papers offer as reward I shall marry my Georgette and be happy."

That was on a Monday. Twice every day and once every evening the worthy Commissaire called the student to the telephone.

"Quite well, thank you," was the unvarying reply. "Madame feeds me on the best food and gives me the oldest wine she has. I am getting fat."

It was true. As the days passed and nothing happened the landlady began to take heart. Every few hours some little dainty was sent up to Ricardo. The young man had brought his books with him and spent his time studying. Once a day—while the room was being cleaned — he went for a walk, calling on the Commissaire on his way back. The mystery was being solved, he told him, but would not say more.

Then came the dreaded Friday. During the evening the Commissaire telephoned twice and received a reassuring reply.

On Saturday morning Ricardo Garibaldi was found hanging from the curtain hook, dead! His legs were bent at right angles under him and his dilated eyes were fixed in a horror-struck stare on the wall. The wire of the telephone had been cut. A table knife, brought up with the supper, was lying on the floor; on its edge were some of the silken insulating threads.

"I am not afraid of ghosts or devils. I will stay the night in your room No. 14 for a hundred francs."

THIS time the Commissaire placed a policeman at the door of No. 14 and telephoned to Monsieur Dufresne.

"This is no suicide," he insisted, "but some unspeakably monstrous crime."

Dr. Bertillon himself came with me to the Rue Lhomond.

Photographs were taken in detail, and the knife packed for transport. I have never seen Dr. Bertillon so moved.

"Poor, poor lad," he murmured, tenderly lifting the body of the young man, so that I could unfasten the cord, which had cut deeply into his neck.

"But they have done this once too often. Now we have them. Look!" and he pointed to the purple mark of the rope. I looked, but failed to see what he meant.

"Measure the thickness of the cord," he whispered.

I did so with special callipers.

"Now measure the weal on his neck."

I did this too, and shivered. The rope which had strangled the unfortunate youth had been several millimetres thinner than the cord from which he had been suspended after death had ensued.

"You see," said my chief, still in a whisper. "They came in—he was then already helpless—strangled him, and held his legs doubled under him. Then, when rigor mortis had set in, he was suspended with that cord from the hook.

"The fiends! It was the strange position of the legs, as if the victims had drawn them up whilst hanging themselves, which deceived everyone and made it appear to be suicide. Yet always they forget something. This time it was the thickness of the cord."

"And the knife?" I asked.

"Oh, we shall find nothing there, I'm afraid. They would use a handkerchief to hold it with. However, we'll see."

Suddenly he looked searchingly at the carpet.

"Give me a knife—quick," he whispered, excitedly. I did so.

Cautiously he lifted up the edge of the carpet. Under it was a small white object. It was a ball of tightly-rolled paper. Opening it we saw that it was covered with a faint tracing in pencil. Aided by the lens we made out several words.

"Something—happening—the wall is——" Then came a word that looked like "shining," then the single word "assassins"!

With a gesture Dr. Bertillon indicated the

wall near the bed; then in a loud voice he said :—

"Well—it's obviously only another case of insanity. Come along, we are wasting our time."

Gathering my implements I followed him out of the room. In the corridor the unhappy landlady was waiting, wringing her hands.

"*Eh bien*, monsieur," she wailed, "have you discovered the cause of all these deaths ?"

Dr. Bertillon shook his head.

"There is no cause," he replied, loudly, "it is just coincidence. My men will come in a day or two and fumigate the room in case there is some poison in the air; otherwise we can do nothing. The policeman will stay until the body of that poor young student is taken away. Then you may let it again. If the people who sleep there know nothing of these suicides, nothing will happen."

Turning a deaf ear to her laments he walked downstairs. In the hall he met the husband, apparently maudlin with drink. I saw Dr. Bertillon stop and look searchingly at him; then, after a sharp order to the waiting policeman, he passed out.

In the car he lay back silently. I could see that his brain was actively engaged with the case.

ONCE in his office his demeanour changed. Order after order was given to obedient officials; for an hour I was left alone whilst he interviewed the chiefs of several departments; then he returned with a satisfied smile.

"Now, *mon ami*," he said, sitting down at his vast table, strewn with a litter of documents, photographs, and pages covered with weird hieroglyphics, "I can see that you are on 'hot coals,' as we say. But I am going to tell you very little. Instead, I am going to ask you to send for your big American friend, Bannister of Pinkerton's Agency. When he arrives, come back to me, and we will also plot a little. No—don't look so happy—I am not sure whether I will risk sending either of you to that infernal place. Indeed, it is only because you will be able to play successfully the parts of foreigners that I feel inclined to think about it."

A rare smile transformed his grave face. I thanked him hurriedly and rushed out. I could hardly contain myself.

Without waiting to make sure that Bannister would be in, I drove to the Rue Scribe. Fortunately for my peace of mind the American was there.

He looked at me in surprise as I burst excitedly into his study.

"Say, friend," he drawled, "what's happened ? Are the apaches after you ?"

"It's the Hotel d'Amsterdam," I cried, "and Bertillon asked me to send for you."

"Well, that's fine, but why ? Are we to commit suicide ?"

Briefly I related all I knew. When I had concluded, Bannister rose and put on his hat.

"Come on," was all he said. "Your chief is a genius. Let's go to him at once."

We met Lebrun, the analyst, coming out as we hurried along the corridor leading to the rooms of Dr. Bertillon.

"*Bonne chance*," he called after us genially, "but beware of going to sleep !"

I stopped with my hand on the door.

"Why ?" I asked.

Lebrun pointed to the room. "The doctor will tell you."

After shaking hands with Bannister, Dr. Bertillon pointed to chairs and began, turning to my friend :—

"You are not officially one of us, Monsieur—officially, I say—for unofficially there is no one we esteem more. So I have taken the liberty of calling you in to help us in avenging all those poor people who were tortured and killed in monstrous fashion. I know you are afraid of nothing, and that you can play the part which I have in my mind sufficiently well to deceive even Orientals. No—I am not teasing you, Monsieur," for Bannister, whose fondness for make-up was well known to the Sûreté, had flushed and shifted uneasily in his chair.

"We do not as a rule use disguises, but in this case it will be useful—and even necessary. But I will tell you briefly what you must guard against. Above all go armed, and do not hesitate to shoot. The evil creature we hope to capture will have no compunction. These are strange words from a member of the Sûreté, which fights for law and order. But the case is exceptional, and I would never forgive myself if anything happened to either of you. Here are two sets of respirators Lebrun has made for you. You must use them as soon as you notice the least odour. The murderers are in league with the Chinaman Li Hang Foo, who owns the house next to the hotel. But they have probably several secret exits, and we lack evidence enough for a conviction; that is why I am risking your lives.

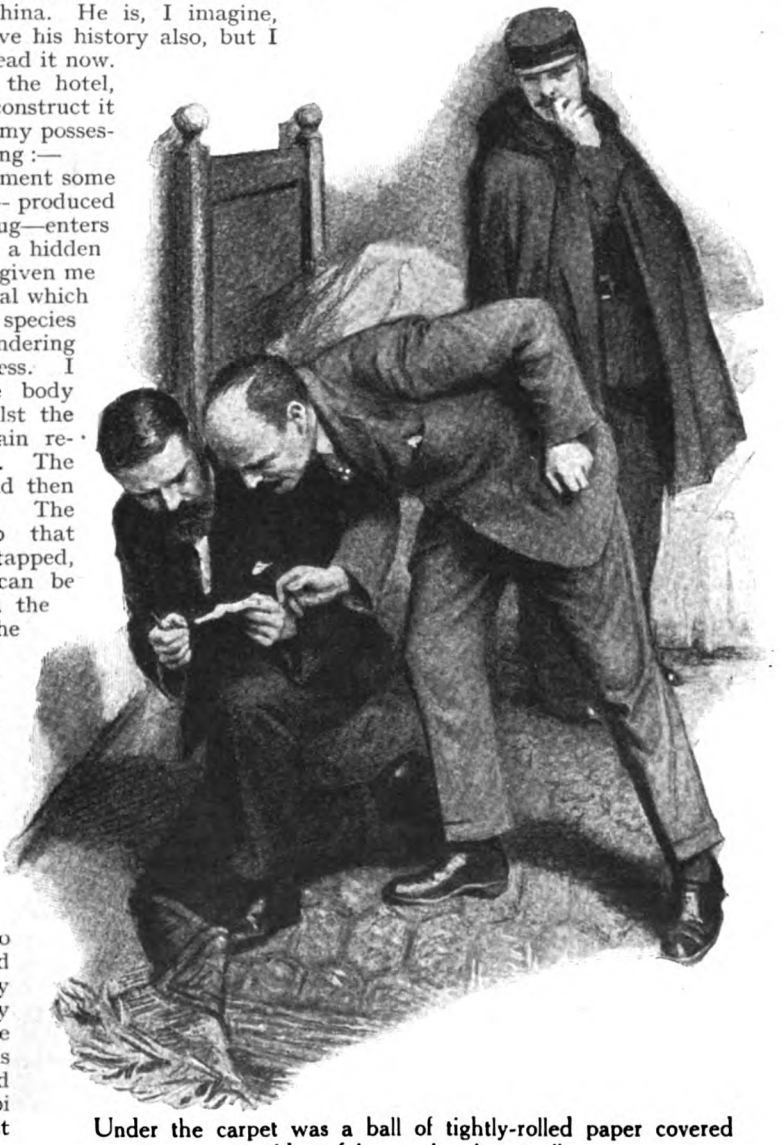
"As far as I have been able to ascertain, these same evil creatures were responsible for the recent mysterious death of Charles Langham, the Hatton Garden diamond merchant, who is supposed to have committed suicide; his body was found in the river. And there are many others in London and in Paris, which I will not cite now. We have identified the Chinaman.

He originally came from San Francisco and was notorious there as one of the worst hatchet men of Chinatown. He, however, is only a humble member of the gang. The leader and brains of this criminal organization is one Hanoi Shan, who comes from French Tonkin China. He is, I imagine, a madman. I have his history also, but I will not stop to read it now. Their method at the hotel, so far as I can reconstruct it from the facts in my possession, is the following :—

"At a given moment some sort of vapour — produced by an Eastern drug—enters the room through a hidden pipe. Lebrun has given me the names of several which would produce a species of catalepsy, rendering its victims helpless. I imagine that the body became rigid, whilst the nerves and brain remained active. The electric light would then be extinguished. The wires leading to that room have been tapped, and the current can be switched off from the other side of the wall. One of my men has been busy in the room, apparently repairing the telephone wire which was cut, but really in order to make sure of this. Then a part of the wall would slide or move back. The mechanism of this is so cunningly contrived that it is hardly possible to see any joint. I imagine that the assassins thereupon entered and that this Hanoi Shan assisted at some awful torture of which his crazy brain invented variations in every case.

"It is horrible even to speak of what must have taken place. That poor lad to-day—— But I will not go into details. Then they strangled their victim, whilst he was in a kneeling posture, and later, when the body was quite rigid, he was placed in the position in which all four were found. Now—this is what you must do. You, Monsieur Bannister, will leave the Nord Station when the train from Cherbourg arrives on Wednesday afternoon at five thirty-five. Even to that extent must we be thorough. A porter will give you the card of the hotel and you will go there.

"Your appearance will be that of an American business man, one who might possibly deal in precious stones. I think I can safely leave the choice of your make-up to you."



Under the carpet was a ball of tightly-rolled paper covered with a faint tracing in pencil.

Here Bannister grinned suddenly, and we both had to laugh.

"You, Monsieur Ashton-Wolfe, since you speak Dutch, will apparently arrive from Holland in the morning, and you will drive to the Hotel d'Amsterdam. I have chosen Wednesday because the first boat from New York arrives then. Besides, nothing will happen until Friday!"

"But why Friday, in the name of Heaven?" asked Bannister.

"Ah, that, Monsieur, I cannot tell—some freak, some whim of this creature, Hanoi Shan. Possibly some Eastern superstition. I do not know. Neither of you will ask for any special room, but insist on being high up because you do not like the noise from the street. Under no condition must you know each other, but since you will eat at the hotel, you will appear to become acquainted. During the day spend your time as you will. You, Monsieur Bannister, will be given room No. 14. The landlady will be out when you arrive—I will see to that—and the husband will take you there himself."

"How do you know that, doctor?" Bannister asked, curiously.

"I am sure of it," Dr. Bertillon replied. "There will be trouble when Madame returns, but that does not matter. On Friday evening you must both dine early and retire—separately. You, Monsieur Ashton-Wolfe, will then go unseen to No. 14. The door will be unlocked, and as soon as you tap on the handle, you, Monsieur Bannister, must switch off the ceiling light for a second and then switch on the table lamp. That second will allow your friend to enter and hide under the bed. Do not speak to each other—have your respirators ready and wait. Here they are, you see; they are in the form of plugs which will fit into the nostrils. Do not breathe through the mouth, however unpleasant the sensation these things produce. I and my men will be ready. As soon as the door in the wall slides back, and the men have entered, capture them, blow your whistles, and rush into the next house. Waste no time and stun or shoot anyone who resists. The house will be surrounded and we shall meet inside. Every one of your colleagues will wear a tricolour arm-band. Now, good-bye—and good luck!"

THE intervening days until Wednesday were very dull. We dared not go near the Rue Lhomond, although we were both eager to try a little prowling about the neighbourhood on our own account.

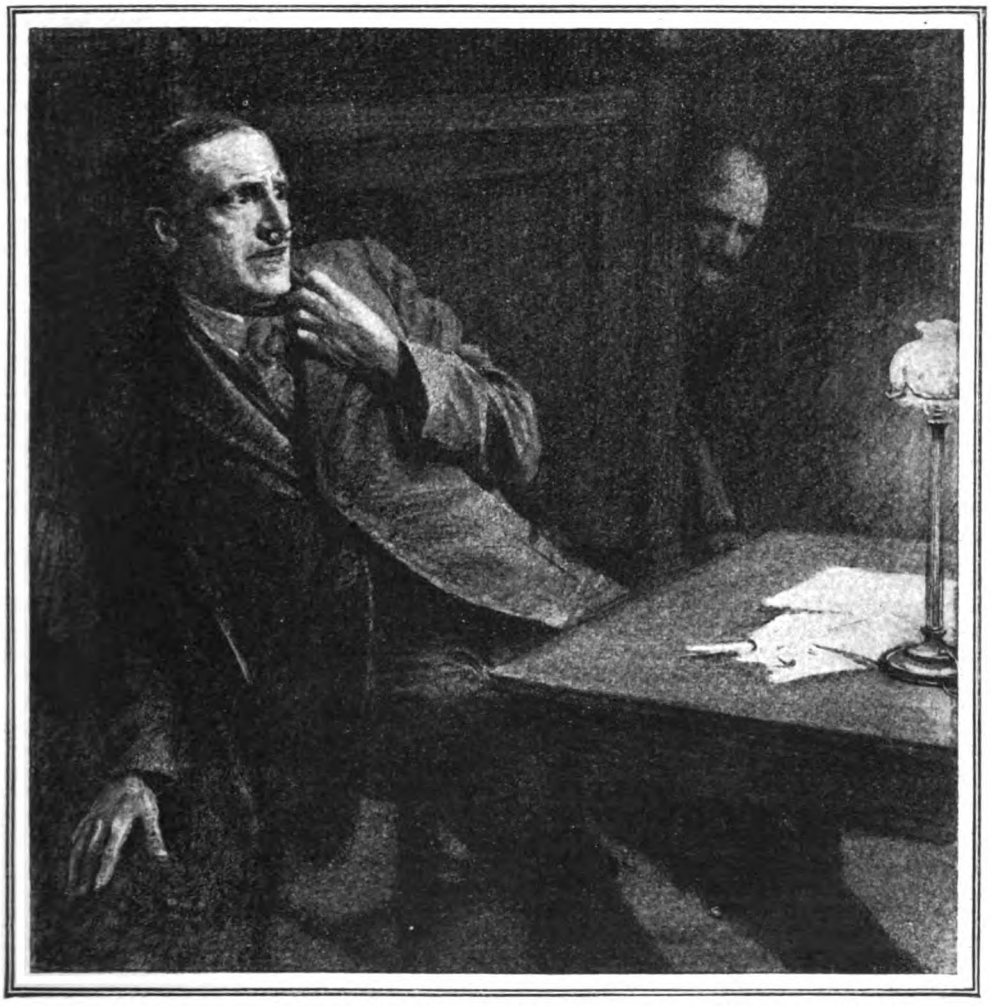
On the Wednesday morning I dressed as a middle-class traveller, filled a bag with clothes, gummed some Dutch hotel labels on the outside, and, taking a cab, drove to the North station, telling the cabman to stop at the Customs. Here I passed through the private door of the inspector's office, and so was able to mingle with the crowd leaving the train I was supposed to have travelled by. Shortly after, I arrived at the hotel. Speaking French with a pronounced Dutch accent, I obtained a room on the third floor—No. 11.

At six o'clock I saw Bannister arrive. He had cleverly dressed himself in such a fashion that he looked the typical American business man, just off the boat after a long sea trip. A bag and steamer trunk labelled "Wanted—first-class" completed the illusion. He wore spectacles and a travelling cap, and his brown shoes were of the broad, square-toed type then fashionable in the States. I had seen Madame go out soon after my arrival, and the husband, Mynheer Van der Velde, conducted him straight up to No. 14. The game had started.

I slept badly that night! The next day at lunch Bannister passed me the mustard—I handed him the bread—and we fell naturally into conversation. I discovered *that he was from America*, and, since *I spoke a little English*, was delighted to try it on him. I do not know what passed between husband and wife when she discovered that a guest was staying in No. 14—but no change was made. We both watched the Dutchman carefully, for we suspected that he was an accomplice, but he spent most of his time in his own room.

At last Friday evening arrived. I asked Madame for some aspirin at dinner, complaining that I had a bad headache, and told her that I should go to bed at once. Bannister went noisily into the writing-room and, taking a bundle of paper and envelopes, he ordered pen and ink to be sent to his room. I quickly put on rubber-soled shoes, made sure that my pistol was fully loaded, slipped several extra clips into my pockets, together with an electric torch, and crept across to No. 14. Tapping on the handle, I heard the click of a switch; in an instant I was in the room and had crawled beneath the bed as the table lamp was lighted. A strong hand came feeling under the valance and a quick clasp and grip was all we dared to do. But it was enough—it braced us for the coming ordeal. Peeping out I perceived my friend sitting at the table facing the wall. I saw that he had inserted the little cones of specially-prepared gauze into his nostrils, and I did the same.

An hour passed in absolute silence. Suddenly a clock chimed eleven, and with the sound came another—a sibilant breathing, which proceeded from Bannister. He



Bannister was leaning back in his chair, rigid, his eyes glued on the wall. Horrified at his appearance, I was about to crawl out, when his hand motioned me back. I understood.

was leaning back in his chair, rigid, his eyes glued on the wall. Horrified at his appearance, I was about to crawl out, when his hand, which was hanging down by his side, motioned me back. I understood. His keen senses had noticed something, and he was feigning to be overcome in order to deceive unseen watchers. I pulled out my respirators and was at once aware of a subtle odour that caused my head to swim. Quickly I replaced the gauzes. At that instant the light went out! I at once slipped forward and crouched beside the bed, watching the wall with straining eyes, pistol and lamp ready. Bannister remained in the chair, but I saw that his hand now held a shining automatic.

Several minutes passed—then came a rasping, grating sound, and where the wall had been we saw a faintly luminous haze which gradually became brighter. Abruptly a figure was revealed, standing in a recess. I say a figure, but it was a nightmare horror! From the shoulders of the squat, deformed body, clad in Chinese fashion, swung two long thin arms with narrow hands and knotted, crooked fingers which shook and quivered like the antennæ of an insect. But the face, the wicked, inhuman face! It has often haunted my dreams since; the mouth was twisted into an evil smile, and the thin, flexible lips moved ceaselessly from side to side, whilst the eyes, luminous like those of a cat, glared at Bannister with

hypnotic fixity. A few seconds this beast remained thus—then he stepped forward into the room, chuckling hideously.

From behind him came several others, all Orientals. They neared my friend with gliding, noiseless steps; it was time to act! With a sudden bound I sprang forward—placing myself between them and the opening in the wall. At the same moment I switched on my lamp and yelled, "Stand still and up with your hands!" Simultaneously with my sudden action, Bannister knocked over table and chair and seized the first man, the ogre, by his tunic, pushing his pistol into his stomach. Instantly all was confusion. I felt my legs seized from behind and pulled from under me, whilst my weapon was wrenched from my hand. I heard the roaring detonation of the Colt which Bannister used, and the fall of heavy bodies. Outside several whistles shrilled, and heavy blows sounded somewhere on a door. Feet trampled over me; I seized one of these, bringing the man to the ground. Then Bannister was helping me up, and a pistol was pushed into my hand. The light from the wall had gone out, but luckily Bannister still had his torch. The section of wall was sliding forward, but we pushed the table into the breach and prevented it from shutting. Three men were on the ground; two of them were unconscious, but the one I had pulled down was unhurt, and we quickly slipped handcuffs on him. Someone was pounding furiously on the bedroom door, which we had locked to prevent escape.

Leaving the men outside to break it down, we rushed into the next house, where shrieks and oaths tolds us that a battle was in progress. The police were driving a number of men towards us. Seeing their retreat cut off, they surrendered. Nine men, among whom were four Chinese, were captured in the house we had entered. Three more, of whom two were badly wounded, were in room No. 14, but the monster, Hanoi Shan, was not amongst them. A search of the premises disclosed an underground passage leading out into a shop in another street. Monsieur Dufresne and Dr. Bertillon were both waiting in the curio dealer's shop below. They were delighted to see that we were unhurt. An exploration of the underground passage disclosed pools and splashes of blood.

"That is from the beast with the shining eyes," said Bannister. "He must have been carried away. I fired two shots with my pistol against his body when my friend fell down, for I thought they had killed him."

MANY were the proofs of murders and thefts we found in the house of Li Hang Foo. There we discovered amongst other things the wallet which had belonged to Culvert.

To my surprise I saw Mynheer Van der Velde standing talking to some of the detectives. M. Dufresne saw my astonished look.

"He has been acting for us ever since the death of the student," he said. "Mynheer is a Customs official employed by America to prevent the smuggling of stones into the States."

We hunted many weeks for the Asiatic, Hanoi Shan, but without result. Some months later the Sûreté received a communication from Buenos Aires informing us that he had been seen there, but had again evaded capture.

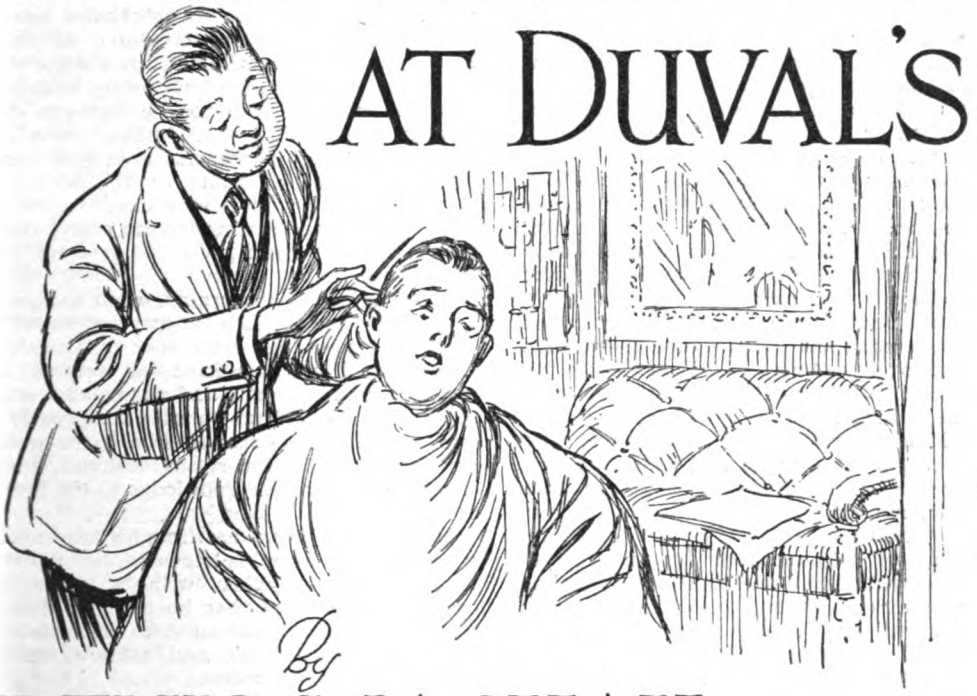
The hotel changed its name and is now a "Pension de famille." The entrance to the next house has been bricked up and the subterranean passage closed. I believe that it still exists, however.

The men we had captured, although some were ably defended, were all sentenced to lifelong detention. Although no actual proof of their complicity could be brought forward, the evidence found in the house was so overwhelming that the jury did not even retire to consider their verdict.

Li Hang Foo was claimed by the American police and extradited. He died in the electric chair.

(Next month: "The Scented Death," another amazing case in which Hanoi Shan played the leading part.)

HALF AN HOUR AT DUVAL'S



By

DENIS MACKAIL

Illustrated by
A. T. SMITH

THERE is a distinct and individual note about Duval's Gentlemen's Toilet Saloon which hardly ever fails to strike those who drift into it accidentally for the first time. Not, we would explain at once, that this implies the least criticism of the way in which Duval's white-coated assistants attend to your requirements. The place is spotless, reasonable in its charges, and the pressure put upon clients to purchase bottles of balm or unguent is neither more nor less powerful than elsewhere. One may add that the pinafores in use at this establishment have the notable advantage of possessing sleeves—a great aid to the perusal of illustrated newspapers—and, should one indulge in a wet shampoo, one is charmed by the consideration which arranges for all the soaping and rubbing to be done while the subject sits erect, and only demands that he should plunge forward over the basin for the actual rinsing.

But—and this is where the distinct and individual note comes in—the chance visitor becomes sensible in a very short time that, although there has been no entrance fee or election by ballot, he is yet in something much more like a club than an ordinary shop. Everyone seems to know, and to address, the white-coated assistants by their Christian names. Duval, wandering from basin to basin, seems—judging by the scraps of conversation that reach one—not only to be on terms of the utmost friendship and familiarity with all his other patrons, but also to be intimate with the most confidential details of their lives. He asks after

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their relations, he discusses their business or social perplexities, he shows them letters that he has received—presumably from mutual acquaintances. Sometimes his voice drops to a whisper, and one hears a rich chuckle of amusement which suggests that he is not above talking scandal. And as he goes on his way, the patrons—their tongues loosened by the odd atmosphere of the place—will continue to babble aloud to the assistants with quite as much, if not more, freedom as (or than) one might expect in the privacy of the Confessional.

As they observe all this, the chance visitors react, with some force, in one of two ways. Either they blush hotly, draw down the corners of their mouths, stiffen their necks, curse the physical impossibility of closing their ears, and swear never to intrude on this gathering of garrulous boon-companions again; or else—which is perhaps commoner in the case of the younger listeners—they fall victims to a wild ambition to gain a niche of their own in this *cercle privé* of Duval's customers. They resolve to come again and again, to make large and unnecessary purchases of those green, red, and yellow bottles on the glass shelves, so only that they may escape this feeling of ostracism; so only that Duval may come and talk to them too; so only that they may earn the right to call his assistants "Albert," or "Charles," or "Louis."

By this cunning appeal to human weakness, the inimitable, if slightly repulsive, Duval has built up no mean practice among the young gentlemen of London town, both in the matter of hair-cutting, shampooing, singeing, and shaving, and in the supply of his various lotions, washes, and mixtures—pre-eminent among which is the Far-Famed Scalpo. And he can as well afford to dispense with the custom of those who wish to keep their private affairs to themselves as he can with that of the fairer, but less easily satisfied, sex.

For though it is true that in recent years Duval has done a certain amount of shingling, for carefully selected clients, his shop remains a man's shop in every other way. It has no separate entrance for shinglers, no intimation outside that it is anything but a Gentlemen's Toilet Saloon, and no permanent-waving outfit hidden away anywhere as the thin end of a wedge which might ultimately develop into a Ladies' Department.

Duval shingles as an act of grace, nor will he do it unless he knows you, and unless you make an appointment on the telephone first. If, however, you satisfy these conditions, he will meet you at the doorway and hustle you swiftly into one of the manicuring cubicles; and there—in a kind of purdah, behind a drawn curtain—Albert, or Charles, or Louis will do whatever is necessary; after which Duval himself will appear once more and hustle you out again.

This side-line is perhaps winked at, rather than encouraged, by the regular *clientèle*. But it is true enough that a brief glimpse of a beautiful creature, or the thought that a beautiful creature may be concealed only a few yards away, adds a kind of spiritual fillip to the business of having one's hair cut. Besides, quite a lot of the male customers have still not discovered that anything of the sort is going on; for Duval is very discreet.

So there is the setting for the story, and here is the story itself.

ON a bright May morning, when the sun shone and the London leaves were still pale green, the glass door of Duval's shop opened and admitted—as well as a roaring sound of traffic and a mingled scent of petrol, dust, and tar—a tall young gentleman whose clothes showed him to be well versed in the latest spring fashions and capable of using such knowledge to the best advantage.

Removing a brown hat from his head and a yellow glove from his left hand, he offered both articles—together with a malacca cane and the glove that he had not been wearing—to the assistant who had come forward to meet him, and acknowledged the assistant's salutation.

"Good morning, Louis," he said.

"A nice day, sair?" suggested the assistant.

"Very likely," said the tall young gentleman. "Ah! Good morning, Duval."

"Good morning, Mr. Wilmington," said the inimitable, if slightly repulsive, proprietor, with the barest trace of a foreign accent. "Nice weather to-day, sir?"

"Not bad," admitted Mr. Wilmington, without any great enthusiasm.

He gave a gentle twitch to his new spring trousers, and sank into the arm-chair, to which Louis was now inviting him.

"Thanks," he said, as Louis held up the pinafore for his long arms. And he gazed silently at his reflection in the big mirror, with an air of moody and critical detachment.

"The same as usual, sair?"

"What's that? Yes, please."

Louis conjured a comb from the pocket of his white coat, selected a pair of scissors from the glass shelf, looked at them disparagingly, laid them down again, and drew a second pair from his other pocket. Very soothingly and slowly he began to snip.

"You have been away, sair?" he asked, presently.

"What's that?" said Mr. Wilmington, with a slight start. "Oh, yes. I've been down at home."

"I thought so, sair. They have not cut your hair at all nicely in ze country."

"They never do," said Mr. Wilmington. "It's not my fault."

"No, no, sair." Louis trilled a polite little laugh. "But I fix it for you. You see, sair; I fix it nicely."

"All right," said Mr. Wilmington.

Louis laughed again, gave three or four skilful snips, and started on a fresh tack.

"And how is your father, sair?" he asked.

"What's that? My father, did you say?"

"Yes, sair." Snip, snip. "How did you leave him, sair?"

"I left him," said Mr. Wilmington, with some emphasis, "in a dashed bad temper."

Louis clicked his tongue sympathetically. But any words of encouragement that he might have added to this sound were swept away by the noise of the traffic outside, for a new arrival had just opened the glass door.

A stranger this time, it would seem; since there was no ceremonial greeting, either from Duval, who was addressing a parcel at his desk in the corner, or from Albert, who was gazing out of the back window as though he saw through the dirty brick wall a vision of his native Switzerland. As for Charles, one might gather that he was either brewing fresh supplies of the Far-Famed Scalpo in the cellar underneath the shop, or else that he was temporarily absent from duty. At any rate, there was no sign of him just now.

"Ahem!" said the new arrival, who also appeared to be tall, young, and well-dressed.

"Psst!" contributed Louis, without ceasing to snip.

"Albert!" snapped Duval, without looking up from his writing.

A shudder passed over Albert's frame, as the vision of his native Switzerland dissolved before his eyes, and he shot round abruptly.

"Good morning, sair. Yes, sair?"

"Hair-cut?" said the new arrival, removing a brown hat from his head and a yellow glove from his left hand.

"Certainly, sair. Quite ready, sair."

Albert spoke briskly and benevolently, for though he had never seen this second young man before, he yet recognized in him exactly the kind of raw material from which Duval's most faithful customers are made. He snatched at the other yellow glove and the malacca cane, and deposited them on and in the public umbrella-stand. He skipped back again, and flapped a towel over the seat next to Mr. Wilmington's.

"Zis way, sair," he crooned. "Hair-cut, sair? 'Ow do you like him?"

"Oh," said the second young gentleman, unhelpfully, "I don't know. Just the usual sort of thing, you know."

Albert tilted his head over, half-closed his eyes, and studied the problem that was thus left to his own discretion.

"A little off ze back," he murmured. "And off ze sides. And just a little off ze top. I fix it nicely, sair."

"All right," said the new arrival, crossing his legs and accepting this rather conventional diagnosis without further comment. "You know the kind of thing, what?"

"Certainly, sair. I fix it."

So Albert whisked a clean pinafore out of the cupboard, and shook it violently to indicate his general willingness and efficiency, and held it up for the new arrival to pass his arms through the sleeves. But the new arrival seemed unfamiliar with this particular refinement, and after Albert had flourished it in front of him three times without any response, he was forced to tuck it round his neck just as though they weren't in Duval's at all.

IT was about this moment that Mr. Wilmington, who had been following all these details in the large mirror, suddenly met the direct reflection of the new-comer's eyes. He scowled slightly, and the new-comer scowled back at him; not because they knew each other or had ever met each other before, but more because of that deep-down impulse which makes us all dislike and resent the existence of people who look rather like ourselves. We don't care, we feel, to be caricatured like that in public—for it is strange how such people always seem to have exaggerated our less admirable features. And so, as each young gentleman beheld the somewhat blatant juvenility of the other—which was, in truth, the most notable characteristic in the rather unformed features of both—he registered his disapproval in a blank stare, a suspicion of a frown, and an immediate transference of his gaze to another quarter.

"You were saying, sair?" resumed Louis, as he snipped delicately at the hair over Mr. Wilmington's right ear.

"What's that?" Mr. Wilmington seemed to gather his thoughts together with the aid of this invaluable formula, and simultaneously to expunge the other customer from the field of his consciousness. It never seems to occur to the young gentlemen in Duval's that anything that they say can be overheard.

"Oh, yes," he went on. "The old man's been in a regular sickening sort of state. Ratty as two sticks."

Duval's assistants soon pick up the intricacies of our elastic language, and Louis again clicked his tongue against the roof of his mouth.

"Has he been ill, sair?" he asked.

"Not a bit of it," said Mr. Wilmington. "Never better in his life. No; it's the old trouble, Louis."

"What is zat, sair?"

"He will keep on worrying me to take on some kind of a job."

Louis's reflection looked as much shocked by this example of parental brutality as though its original had never soiled his hands with labour of any description. And so completely do Duval's assistants identify themselves with their clients' mentality that it was impossible to accuse him of playing a part.

"Indeed, sair?" he murmured, feelingly. "That is very inconsiderate of your father, sair. That is too bad!"

"I should jolly well say it was," said Mr. Wilmington. "And coming on top of everything else, I can tell you it made me feel pretty fed with the old boy. Pretty fed."

Snip, snip, went the scissors. And then:—

"Everything else, sair? Then there has been other trouble, sair?"

Mr. Wilmington glanced at his own image, and flushed.

"More or less," he admitted.

"Trouble with ze races, sair? A lot of my gentlemen were very disappointed at Doncaster, sair—so they tell me. Ze ground was too hard, they say."

"They were right," growled Mr. Wilmington. "What's the use of following form, Louis, if it doesn't rain for three weeks?"

"I believe you, sair," said Louis—becoming more idiomatic as his client's meaning became more obscure. "Ze gentlemen all say it is terrible. Did you lose a packet, sair?"

"A packet. And of course that annoyed my governor, too."

"Too bad," said Louis again. "But why do you tell him, sair?"

"Well," expostulated Mr. Wilmington, "I've got to raise the money somewhere, haven't I? I can't run an account if I don't pay. What?"

"Well, never mind, sair," said Louis, encouragingly. "Now you are in London again, you see; and perhaps ze horses will run more nicely."

The sequence of this line of reasoning was not altogether above criticism, but it certainly seemed to bring a passing gleam of sunshine into Mr. Wilmington's disconsolate features. As if it were still April, though, the gleam was succeeded by another dark cloud.

"The truth is," he confessed, in a sudden burst of confidence that he appeared unable to control, "that the real trouble had nothing to do with racing at all. And nothing to do with my taking on a job, either. It's—well, you know what it is, Louis. I've been hit."

IT is an unwritten rule at Duval's that no assistant may ever reveal that he doesn't understand what a customer is talking about. The atmosphere that we have spoken of demands an immeasurable supply of quiet and inconspicuous tact; and for this reason, among others, Louis decided to play for time.

"Hit, sair?" he repeated. And interrupting his work with the scissors for a moment, he peered anxiously into Mr. Wilmington's face—at the same time raising his eyebrows with an expression of mingled sympathy, sagacity, and concern.

"Yes," said Mr. Wilmington, flushing once more. "And dashed badly, too."

"Ah!" said Louis, pretty certain now that he had solved the mystery. "Zen we shall be hearing something soon, sair. Isn't it?"

Waves of emotion and indecision flickered over the young gentleman's pink face, giving it the air of something seen through the disturbed waters of an aquarium. There was no longer any doubt that the blow of which he had complained had been dealt by Cupid himself, and very little doubt that in another second or two he would be compelled—by his youth, the force of his sufferings, and the effect of his surroundings—to burst out with the tale of his love. The only uncertainty, indeed, which could be said to exist at this point was whether he would keep back anything whatsoever or at all.

And at this critical moment, while Louis snipped ever more gently and gingerly, Duval himself—whose ears miss little or nothing that goes on in his shop—rose from his desk and strolled towards Mr. Wilmington's chair. A look shot from the corners of his small eyes, and, caught skilfully by Louis in the depths of the big mirror, conveyed a familiar message. "This is something for headquarters," it said. "Supreme confessions like this must always be dealt with by the proprietor."

Whereat, in a manner that is not altogether easy to describe, Louis—without visibly shrinking or actually becoming transparent—reduced himself to little more than an animated comb and pair of scissors.

Albert held up a clean pinafore for the new arrival to pass his arms through the sleeves.

And the great Duval took his place in the Confessional.

"Well sir," he said, playing his first card with an assurance born of long practice; "we shall be congratulating you soon, I hear. Eh?"

Young Mr. Wilmington writhed between the arms of his chair; transported by the vision which these words conjured up, glowing with the anticipation of meeting sympathy at last, entranced by the added reality which this scene seemed to give to his thwarted passion, and yet not altogether deaf to an inhibition which hinted—though less strongly every instant—that one oughtn't to discuss these affairs with a hairdresser.

"Eh?" repeated Duval, coming a little closer, and sinking his voice a little lower.

"Oh, well," said Mr. Wilmington, while

not prickles raced up and down his vertebræ. "I—I don't know about that, Duval. I mean to say, nothing's quite settled, you know."

"But you will settle it, sir; eh?"

"Well—I——"

"I always say," interrupted Duval, in his sing-song accents, "that so long as a gentleman knows his own mind, then it is choost a question of time. Eh?"

"Oh, well, Duval——"

Mr. Wilmington writhed again—fortunately away from, instead of towards, Louis's scissors—as he drank in the comfort of this hastily-improvised aphorism. If only he could believe it were true!

And yet that knowledge of his own mind might equally be taken in reference to another character in the drama. There had been very little uncertainty on the part of Mr. Wilmington senior.

"You see, Duval, my governor is absolutely all against it. And, after all, I mean to say——"

An undignified allusion to the matter of purse-strings was spared by a second interruption.

"Ah, your father, sir. I know him. I know him well. I cut his hair for years."

True. But again wasn't there something missing in this chain of logic?

"What do you mean, Duval?"

"I mean, sir, that he often makes little difficulties. But he will come round. Oh, yes. Look, now, how he always uses my Far-Famed Scalpo; and for years he laugh at me when I try to sell it him. Eh?"

Was there anything in this analogy? One would like to think so—even though it was hard to follow it right through. Mr. Wilmington senior had only taken to Scalpo after he had gone practically bald, and if this meant that he would only sanction his son's engagement when it was similarly too late—— No, that wasn't much help. Besides, you could hardly call it an engagement, just yet.

"Yes, but you see, Duval, he's put his hoof down before—well, I mean, while the whole thing's still in the air, as it were. How can I argue with him, when Miss—when the lady, I mean—hasn't even made up her mind?"

"But you have mentioned it to her, sir?"

"Well, no. Not exactly, if you see what I mean. To tell the truth, I only met her a few weeks ago. Of course, I'm fearfully serious, and all that."

"Naturally, sir."

"Well, of course I am. Off my food and everything, you know. But the trouble is—well, the awkward point about it is that she's—well, she's on the stage."

As young Mr. Wilmington reached this obviously awkward point, his eyes again met those of his next-door neighbour in the large mirror over the row of basins. And again a flash of disgust and defiance seemed to pass between them. Anywhere else such an exchange of grimaces—swift and fleeting as it had been—would probably have sufficed to dry up his trickling overflow of autobiography, and have reduced him to confused silence. But at Duval's, as we must continue to emphasize, one simply cannot regard the other customers as possessed of ears. They are, unless personally known to one in other circles, just ciphers in pinafores; soulless dummies who have happened to grow a certain quantity of hair; a mere adjunct to the rest of the mechanical and insensible background.

So, after that purely automatic reaction to the face in the looking-glass, young Mr. Wilmington's thoughts returned at once to his own perplexities. And Duval, after a hasty glance over his shoulder, resumed the conversation at once.

"On the stage, sir?" he repeated. "Then the lady is an actress?"

"Well, yes," said Mr. Wilmington. "And that's just the difficulty."

"But there are lots of very attractive ladies on the stage, sir," said Duval. "And lots of very talented ladies, too. Eh?"

"I know," said Mr. Wilmington. "But my governor won't see it."

"Has he met the lady, sir?"

"Oh, rather. She's been staying down near us, you know; and I thought he rather took to her—at first. Then all of a sudden he started flying off the handle—just because he found out I'd been writing to her; and from that moment, as you might say, everything went from bad to absolutely rotten. In fact, Duval, that's what seemed to make him bring up all this bilge about my doing some work."

"Still, sir," suggested Duval, as Louis laid down the scissors and picked up a pair of clippers; "still, sir, if you've only known the lady a few weeks, there's plenty of time for your father to change his mind. Or perhaps he thinks you are choost a little young, sir, to be quite certain of your own."

"Dash it," said Mr. Wilmington; "I'm twenty-two, Duval. Why, hundreds of fellows I know are getting married, all over the shop. What are you talking about?"

"I beg your pardon, sir. I was only wondering if that was what your father objected to. After all, sir, I imagine the lady would be younger still. Eh?"

"I haven't the faintest idea," said Mr. Wilmington, a little stiffly. "Do you suppose I'd go and ask her her age? And,

anyhow, what's that got to do with it? At the very outside, at the very absolute limit, she can't possibly be more than twenty-nine. And that's all bunkum about wives having to be younger than their husbands. The only thing that matters a curse is whether people are suited to each other."

"Oh, certainly, sir. Everyone will agree with you there."

"And another thing I don't mind telling you," said Mr. Wilmington, warmly, "is that although, naturally, she's keen on her profession, she isn't one of those people who go on acting all the year round. As a matter of fact, she's not had a part for a year, and she told me herself that she'd chuck it if ever she found anybody she really cared for."

"Did she, indeed, sir? That was rather encouraging, wasn't it?"

"Well, I told my old governor that, and he simply grinned at me. Couldn't have been more sickening if he'd tried. Dash it, Duval, you'd think it amused him to see me all coming unstuck and going off my oats."

THIS picturesque summary of his unfortunate condition coincided with the end of the first part of Mr. Wilmington's treatment. Even as he underlined it with a sound that was half a snort and half a groan, Louis picked up a hand-mirror from the glass shelf and held it at varying angles behind the back of the sufferer's neck.

"Zat is all nice, sair?" he asked, following the sufferer's gaze into the big looking-glass.

"Quite, thanks," said Mr. Wilmington, waggling his head about. But he waggled it more as an act of custom and courtesy than because he—or, for that matter, any client of Duval's—could even imagine criticizing an assistant's handiwork. To have done so would have been almost as sensational, and quite as unprofitable, as telling a waiter at a restaurant that one didn't like the look of the dish that he waves in front of one, and then snatches away, preparatory to dismembering its contents.

"And a wet shampoo, sair?" Louis continued, laying the hand-mirror down again.

"What's that? Yes, of course."

"Vairy good, sair."

And while Louis sped away to collect towels from the glass cabinet, Mr. Wilmington once more took up the story of his woes.

"You see, Duval," he added, suddenly, "I couldn't stick it down there in the country, after that sort of thing. And as Miss—as the lady, I mean—was coming up to London, I jolly well came up to London too. Of course it's dashed uncomfortable with the house half shut up, but after all—well, I always feel I might run into her somewhere, you know."

"Then you have not seen the lady in London, sir?"

"How can I?" bleated Mr. Wilmington, twisting right round and gazing up into Duval's face. "I can't go forcing my way into her flat, if she never asks me. Of course, I've written to her once or twice, and I've sent her a few flowers and so forth; but the only time I called there she was out. I'm bound to wait a few days, you know, after that."

"Perhaps," said Duval, "you find her at home next time. Eh?"

"Perhaps," said Mr. Wilmington. "But that's not everything, you know, Duval. Anyone like that is bound to have hundreds of friends, and if I can't see her alone, I might almost as well not see her at all. And, besides, I haven't told you everything."

"No, sir?"

Behind these two gently-murmured words one could hear no trace of mockery or sarcasm, for these are qualities which Duval has long ago ruled clean out of his life—at any rate during his hours of business in the Gentlemen's Toilet Saloon. Nor did they denote anything in the nature of undue curiosity; for Duval must know by this time that he has but to listen, and he will inevitably and unquestionably be told everything. The two words, with their subtly rising inflexion, merely implied that Duval was still tuned in to Mr. Wilmington's slightly erratic wave-length, and that all signals were being noted.

"No, sir?" he murmured again.

"No," said Mr. Wilmington. "You see, Duval, unless I'm very much mistaken, there's one particular blighter who's absolutely pestering her. Absolutely hanging round her like a dashed puppy-dog. Absolutely making a dashed idiot of himself."

"Why, what makes you think that, sir?"

"Well, she said something about it, down in the country. Not that she'd encourage anyone like that, you know. But still, if I came right up against the fellow—in her flat, for instance—I couldn't promise there wouldn't be trouble. One's only human, you know, Duval. One's got to give an outsider like that a lesson."

"Then you've not met this other gentleman yet, sir?"

"'Gentleman'?" sneered Mr. Wilmington, clenching both his fists. "No, I haven't. Not face to face, that is. But—— Oh, all right, Louis; go ahead."

For Louis, having now draped the towels round young Mr. Wilmington's neck, was

seeking an opportunity to perform the next step in the ritual of a wet shampoo; was waiting, in other words, to deposit a dollop of green slime on the top of his head, preparatory to rubbing it up into a luxuriant lather.

This, then, he proceeded to do, with just that extra touch of care and deliberation which the affair receives when Duval is there to study every movement. And Duval gave another subdued sound of attention and interest.

"No, sir?" he repeated.

"No," said Mr. Wilmington, screwing up both his eyes in case any of the green slime should fall into them. "Not face to face. But I've seen the blighter. I saw him last night."

"Indeed, sir?" said Duval. "Where was that, sir?"

"Well," explained Mr. Wilmington, "I happened to be taking a stroll round—well, in the neighbourhood of Miss — that's to say, near her flat, you see. I mean, a fellow's liable to go on like that, you know, when he's in my sort of state. And—well, I couldn't help noticing that there was another fellow doing exactly the same thing. Stopping and looking up at her windows, too. I tell you, Duval, it fairly made my blood boil."

"But you didn't recognize him, sir?"

"No, I didn't. Whenever I came oozing along the street, he sort of edged away. But whenever I came back again, there he was. A tall, thin sort of fellow, you know. Looked at me as if they ought to have sent him back to school. Well, what I mean is, Duval, that it's a pretty rotten sort of way for anyone to behave. It's a sneaking, underhand sort of trick. But at the same time, if he's really a friend of Miss Latimer's, then——"

The speaker stopped suddenly as he realized that he had let the actual name of his heroine slip out. But this wasn't all that happened. Even as Duval uttered an uncontrollable gasp, and took a hasty step backwards, the customer on Mr. Wilmington's immediate left leapt out of his chair so abruptly that Albert dropped

both comb and scissors on the floor. But the clatter of their fall was drowned in the cry that burst from this second young gentleman's throat.

"You unmentionable little pip-squeak!" he roared. "So it was you, was it? How dare you come into a barber's shop and mention a woman's name like that! You low-down cad! You——"

"That's enough!" screamed Mr. Wilmington, struggling also out of his arm-chair.

"You heard what I said about your behaviour, and I dashed well mean it. Who gave you the right to come eavesdropping and spying in here—as well as in the street? My hat! You'll be dashed sorry you——"

"Take that, you great oaf!" interrupted his rival, aiming a savage blow which got no farther than the inside folds of his large pinafore.

"Take that, you great oaf!" interrupted his rival, aiming a savage blow which got no farther than the inside folds of his large pinafore, while its empty sleeves waved wildly in the air.

"I'll give you something to remember me by!" squeaked Mr. Wilmington, as the green slime began to trickle all over his face. "Here! Where are you?"

"Schentlemen! Schentlemen!" panted the inimitable, if slightly repulsive, Duval, dancing about as near as he dared to the infuriated combatants, and letting his accent do whatever it chose. "Not in my shop, please! Albert! Louis! Why don't you do nottings? Stop zem, I tell it you!"

But Louis was reeling under a back-hander from Mr. Wilmington, blinded by a cascade of soap and lather. And Albert, attempting to obey the other gentleman's heated request that his pinafore should be removed, had skidded in a puddle of the same mixture and was measuring his length on the linoleum.

"Charles!" bellowed Duval. "Fetch ze police!"

And so, as the two adversaries—each severely handicapped by the unusual circumstances in which he had taken up the other's challenge—fought, the one with his encumbering pinafore, and the other with that mask of green slime; as they stumbled, and flapped their arms, and barked indistinguishable threats which they were wholly unable to carry out; as all this uproarious scene re-echoed through that respectable Gentlemen's Toilet Saloon, there was heard also the sound of a curtain being drawn back on its rings, and out from the nearer of the two manicuring cubicles stepped Charles—Duval's third assistant—followed immediately by a beautiful creature, who had just been replacing a beautiful hat on her beautiful head.

"Wait, wait, mademoiselle!" cried Duval, trying to make his fear sound like gallantry. "Charles! *Vite!* Ze police!"

"Stay where you are, Charles," said the beautiful creature, instantly. "Do you think I want this in all the papers? Get out of the way, Duval."

"But, Mees Latimer——"

"Quiet!" snapped Miss Latimer, impatiently. And raising her voice above the hubbub: "Archie! Cecil! Stop that nonsense at once!"

AND the nonsense was stopped. The one voice in the world that could have brought peace into that shop had brought it in the space of exactly one second. Pale and panting, Mr. Archibald Wilmington and Mr. Cecil Haverstock cowered beneath the whip-lash of those beautiful eyes. If ever appearances were against two lovesick young wretches, then here was their inescapable doom at this moment.

"You both," added Miss Latimer, showing neither mercy nor favouritism, "look absolutely ridiculous."

And there was no answer to that.

"You have both," continued Miss Latimer, "been bores and nuisances ever since I have known you; and the less I see of you after this, the better I shall be pleased. Do you hear me?"

There could be no doubt that they heard her.

"Between the young man who talks about me to his hairdresser and the young man who uses that as a pretext for fighting," Miss Latimer went on, "I have nothing to choose. If you want to knock each other's first teeth out anywhere else—provided that my name is not brought into it—you have my best wishes. But," said Miss Latimer, "before you resume this particular form of exercise I would suggest your waiting just one more day. In to-morrow's *Times* and *Morning Post*, Archie, you will read of my engagement to your father. And I entirely agree with him that the only hope for young men of twenty-two lies in regular office hours."

With these words, to which her stage experience—slight as it had been—did more than justice, Miss Latimer glanced coldly at Duval, dropped a ten-shilling note into Charles's hand, and made a graceful and distinguished exit.

Two utterly deflated young gentlemen—the one feebly extricating himself from a voluminous pinafore, and the other groping helplessly for a towel—remained behind, mutely cursing the respective days on which they had been born. Much as they still disliked each other, this feeling was as naught compared with their overwhelming distaste for themselves.

AND Duval? How is the inimitable, if slightly repulsive, Duval to rebound from this painful and shameful scene? Will he emerge triumphantly from so supreme a trial for his tact, or will he now lose both the old customer and the new? A deucedly awkward moment, this, you would say, for the inimitable, if slightly repulsive, Duval.

So keenly do we feel for him that we avert our eyes from the Gentlemen's Toilet Saloon; and when at length we look back once more, both those stricken young nincompoops have gone. What, we ask breathlessly, does it mean?

We creep up to where Duval is again seated at his desk. We peer cautiously over his shoulder. He is writing in his day-book; and as we follow the point of his pen, a warm rush of admiration and relief sweeps over us and penetrates to the very core of our being.

For this is the entry that Duval has just made:—

"Two large-sized bottles of Far-Famed Scalpo at 25s. . . . £2 10s. 0d."

THESE SENTIMENTS

By

GUY RAWLENCE

Illustrated by
BALLIOL SALMON

NATHAN J. SHANKS—more usually Nat—switched on the lights of his sitting-room and shut the door with a sort of sullen impatience. Then he threw down on a table the American magazines which he had bought, lit a cigarette, and admitted to himself that he was as bored as one may be. He could go out to a show, of course, or ring up one or other of the people whose acquaintance he had made on the *Mauretania*, but the idea of a solitary visit to the theatre didn't appeal to him, and a certain obstinate pride prevented him from telephoning. "I'm dashed if I'm going to hook on right away," he said to himself. "Play the poor little lone dawg looking for kindness." No; he'd come on this trip of his own choice, and he would carry it through on his own. But he somehow couldn't prevent himself from exclaiming, "Gosh! I was a mutt to have come."

Yet it was one of the natural corollaries of the astonishing thing which had happened to him. For when suddenly you inherit, entirely unexpectedly, a matter of a million dollars it is not likely you are going on with a job which brings in, after a good deal of hard work, three hundred a month. It was indeed only reasonable that Nat should have handed in his resignation straight away and decided to try spending some of his fabulous amount of cash. But to a young man of his tastes and temperament, though New York had offered facilities enough, they were not of the kind which particularly appealed to him. It was all very well for a month or so letting the notes fall from your hands as carelessly as if they were the trail for a paper-chase, to buy anything you pleased, to give your friends the most amazing time of their lives; you couldn't go on doing that. Besides, he soon began to feel that a number of those friends were friends no longer but simply recipients. And he didn't like that. For Nat believed in life; perhaps because he believed in himself—which may possibly be the same thing.

So rather than lose both his friends and his illusions he had decided to quit it all and go over to Europe. And up to the present he hadn't regretted the decision. He had enjoyed the voyage across, the arrival at Plymouth that morning, and the journey to London, but now alone in his sitting-room he was rather a disgruntled young man, inclined to grumble not only at his present circumstances, but at the fabulous chance which had changed him from the brisk under-secretary to the under-manager of the Osowite Tooth Paste Company to the occupier of a suite at the Savoy Hotel, London.

His temper was not smoothed by the discovery that the magazines he had bought were ones he had seen in New York. "Gosh!" he said again. He strode over to the window and, pulling back the curtains, peered out into what seemed to be a solid sea of mist. He was immensely surprised, for when he had looked out of this same window before going down to the restaurant for dinner he had seen the dark surface of the river, speared with reflections, and the width of the Embankment with trams going to and fro like illuminated shuttles. Rather fine it had been.

It was several moments before Nat realized that he was gazing into that unpleasant phenomenon, a London fog. When he did so, he was immensely interested, for,

as is well known, fogs are held to be one of the dubious specialities of London. And his boredom vanished. He no longer regretted his distaste to ringing up his shipboard acquaintances, or cursed at the fact that those magazines offered no amusement. The fog should be his amusement. He would go out and sample it.

But when outside the Savoy he discovered that the sampling of a fog meant the employment of several senses; that you not only saw its clammy folds, but smelt, tasted, and felt them, that his eyes smarted, his nose tickled, and his throat seemed as if he had smoked fifty cigarettes, he wasn't so pleased with the phenomenon. But he continued to be interested as he made a slow progress down the murky length of the Strand; and more than ever interested when, arrived in Trafalgar Square, he saw the buses crawling as if they were wounded dragons, and the lights of the naphtha-flares splashing on the bronze flanks of Landseer's lions.

Presently he continued up the Haymarket. Here the fog was less dense, and he contrasted the sky-signs of Piccadilly Circus unfavourably with those of Broadway; and dimly he could see the roofs of the buildings. Accustomed to New York, they seemed mere dwarfs of architecture. Yet, though he might disparage certain things of this London in which he found himself, he was stirred by the queerness of the effects which the fog produced. It struck him as pretty astonishing how these clouds, silent, practically impalpable, could, like a supernatural enemy, paralyse a modern city. For, soon after leaving the polychrome solicitations of the Piccadilly signs—and he went forward at random, not crediting that the fog should be so thick that progress should be impossible—he saw that everything was paralysed. There was no sound of traffic other than that of cautious footsteps. He saw a car drawn up at the kerb and apparently abandoned there, and now the street lamps, which hitherto had spread a restricted but distinguishable aura of light, seemed merely little incandescent blobs—like oranges—hung in the fog, which was of the consistency of dirty cotton-wool. He might have been walking in a city totally abandoned.

"Shucks!" Nat exclaimed. "I'm gonna lose my route. Best get back."

But though he swung round and began to proceed in the direction whence he imagined he had come, he went forward for a good ten minutes, and he did not find himself in Piccadilly Circus. And presently, when he had, it seemed, stumbled on indefinitely, feeling his way by the kerb, or by running his hand along iron railings which now and then ended suddenly and rather disconcertingly, he began to get angry. "A God-forsaken burg," was at that moment his opinion of London.

THEN suddenly he came to a region where the fog was less obscure. He heard the mutter of a motor engine, and the next moment he was confronted by the figure of what appeared to be a man of immense height, on whose breast shone a lantern like a jewel. Almost he collided with this august figure. Anyhow, he halted.

"I reckon you're a policeman," Nat said, after they had stared at one another for a moment. "What they call a Bobby."

"Sometimes, sir," the policeman replied gravely, and then: "A bit foggy to-night, sir."

"If you call this a bit, I don't want the whole cake," Nat said. "Can you put me wise where I am?"

"Berkeley Square, east side, sir."

"Anywhere near the Savoy Hotel?"

"Not so near as is worth mentioning, but if you keep straight along you'll come to Piccadilly."

"That's no help, Bobby. I'm fresh to this burg," Nat admitted, though somewhat grudgingly. Somehow he never cared to admit ignorance.

"Maybe you'd pick up a taxi in Piccadilly. It's clearer down there. Patchy, that's what the fog is to-night, patchy. Not a pea-souper."

And for several minutes the policeman dilated upon the subject of pea-soupers while Nat smoked a cigarette, standing in the little window of light made by the policeman's lantern. And he was not adverse to the conversation, for, after all, the police-force is almost as much a speciality of London as a fog.

The two of them became almost friendly, for there was something in Nat's nature which induced friendliness wherever he went, and when presently he had come to the conclusion he'd better see about getting back, and had, rather hesitatingly, suggested the policeman should accept five shillings (which was near enough a dollar as didn't count), the policeman put him on his way and wished him a "Good night, sir," in a voice of thunderous affability.

Nat had gone fifty yards, perhaps, keeping to the pavement as he had been advised to do, but walking fairly briskly, for certainly the air was clearer, and he could even see the shapes of the plane trees, stark and mysterious, across the road, when he was arrested by a woman's voice, low and enthralling, close beside him.

"Oh, bother!" it said. "Oh, damn!" it said.

Looking round, Nat saw a tall, slim figure,

"Pardon me," Nat said, "but can I help?"
"Thank you," she said. "The key won't turn. So tiresome."

wrapped in a fur cloak, wrestling unavailingly, it was to be presumed, with the latch of a massive door. Instinctively he stepped forward.

"Pardon me," Nat said, "but can I help?"

The figure turned swiftly, it seemed with apprehension, and Nat, in the diminished light of the lamp which stood opposite the door, found himself face to face with a very beautiful lady. A moment she was silent, peering at him closely. He felt that she was trying to determine what sort of young man it might be who had spoken to her.

"Thank you," she said at last. "The key won't turn. So tiresome."

Her voice was without any trace of the impatience which had attracted Nat's attention. He stepped forward and put his hand to the key—an old-fashioned one, not the accustomed Yale—which was inserted in the lock. Certainly it was stiff, as if the key were rusted, but without using much force Nat turned it. Slowly the door swung open, giving on to a black cavity, which echoed back his "That's done it."

"Thank you so much," said the lady, and, passing Nat, she entered, and was absorbed into the darkness. Was he dismissed? He supposed so. But was it right that he should be dismissed? Half-a-dozen questions came to his mind. Who was this lady going into this apparently empty house out of the fog? What was her business? Had she, indeed, any business there? It looked pretty odd. Perhaps he ought to call that Bobby. He was suspicious and curious. Moreover, the lady's voice had been extraordinarily attractive.

THEN, while he stood irresolute, it spoke again:—

"I never could find these switches, and, of course, usually one light is left on. Could you strike a match?"

"Sure," Nat said, and feeling in his pocket he brought out a gold cigarette lighter. A little flame spurted up and shone full on the lady's face. Full, too, on his. For a moment they looked directly at one another; rather searchingly, as if they were both trying to gauge the other's integrity. Then she turned, moved a few paces, and raised her hand. Lights blazed up. Nat looked round him with astonishment.

They were standing in a great hall. The floor was paved with black and white marble, the walls panelled with some dark wood. Here and there hung tall portraits of men and women in the dress of the eighteenth century. They were lit by concealed lights, while in the centre of the painted ceiling was a crystal candelabrum. It was the sort of place which the directors of films vainly endeavour to reproduce as settings for scenes of life as traditionally lived by English aristocrats.

"Gee!" Nat exclaimed.

The lady glanced at him anxiously, as if endeavouring to read his thoughts. She was successful.

"You are wondering what this all means," she said. "You are thinking it is all rather queer. You're not sure that you oughtn't to call a policeman."

Nat smiled. "I certainly was," he said.

"Do, if you like," the lady continued, "but I would rather you didn't. He would be able to vouch for my right to be here, but, as it happens, I prefer that not even a policeman should know that I am."

"If it's your house——" Nat protested.

"It is my husband's house," said the lady. "But perhaps you don't believe me?"

There was a tone of asperity in her voice. Nat's suspicions grew—against his desire. What ought he to do? Leave the lady alone in this apparently deserted house, all its valuables at her mercy, or go to the door, put his fingers in his mouth, and give whistle?

The lady moved towards Nat across the marble floor, which reminded him of a gigantic draughts board.

"You are an American," she said. "Perhaps that makes it more difficult for you to understand, and—to trust me."

"I guess you're right. I'm no end sorry, but I just quite can't."

She smiled, and with that smile hid the anxiety which had clutched her, her fear of the determination which she had read in this young man's eyes that he was on the point of calling the police.

"But I trust *you*," she said, slowly. "Listen! As you see, the house is empty. We—my husband and I—left it a week ago. I didn't think I should ever come back to it. But I had to come back to fetch something. It has no value except for myself—and I am astonished that it has value even for me—so, if I convince you that I have no other purpose in coming here than to fetch this—this trifle, will you promise to do nothing? Five minutes, and we can leave the house together."

And Nat, faced with her sincerity, her evident distress, and her very evident beauty, nodded his head. But inwardly he cursed himself for a fool.

"Thank you," said the lady. "Will you please take the key out of the lock and close the door?"

Nat turned and did as she asked him, then obeyed her beckoning hand across the floor to a flight of shallow steps.

They mounted in silence to a shadowed

landing. Nat heard the handle of a door turn, and the click of an electric switch. Then a shaft of light guided him to the room which the lady had entered. He followed her into it.

The room was small, furnished with a restrained elegance. On the duck-egg panelled walls hung Chinese paintings; deep chairs flanked the hearth; in one corner stood a walnut bureau. The carpet was dark and thick. So much Nat noticed before the lady spoke.

"This is what I have come for. Only this," she said; and crossing to the bureau she took up a photograph in an onyx frame and handed it to Nat.

The photograph was of a man of, perhaps, forty years of age, with direct eyes and a little clipped moustache. Mentally Nat considered him "a decent enough looking guy."

A moment he held the frame in his hand, then returned it to the lady. Immediately she put it in the outer pocket of the brocaded bag which she was carrying.

"Thank you. I—I think I must rest for a minute," she said, a quiver in her voice, and, sinking into one of the chairs, almost unbelievably she began to cry.

For a little Nat was at a loss. This certainly wasn't what he had expected; the last thing, in fact. He stood there helplessly, considering what in the name of wonder he should do, how to comfort, how to help, what to suggest. Presently, almost mechanically, he stooped to the switch of the electric radiator which stood in a steel basket on the hearth. Suddenly he had realized that the room was abominably cold, that the fog had crept into it like an icy miasma.

"I reckon you're cold," Nat said.

"I am—frightfully," the lady replied between her sobs.

And then was silent.

FOR a little Nat stood motionless, staring at her crouched in the chair, her face, her very lovely face, buried in a shred of handkerchief. And then, afraid that she might look up and catch him watching her, he shifted his glance—but most unwillingly—to the Chinese kylins which grinned at him from the mantelpiece. Then his eyes happened to fasten on the outside card of a little heap lying there. Before he knew what he was doing, he had read a printed invitation to the Countess of Ebbesbourne.

Instinctively once more he looked towards the lady in the chair. She, presumably, was the Countess. "Gosh," thought Nat, "another speciality of London."

At that moment she began to speak, in little short sentences. The words seemed forced from her involuntarily. It was as if she simply had to talk.

"It's absurd one should be sentimental," she said. "I never expected I should be. But I *had* to have that photograph. I couldn't go away without. I'm starting for India to-morrow. Perhaps I shall never come back. Why should one—now? And yet it all seems so silly. Just temper and nerves. Nerves after five years! Quite, quite absurd. And I don't want to be sentimental. Or do I? But I couldn't go away without Alec's photograph. I wonder if he's started yet. Africa. Big-game shooting. What a comparatively peaceful life the unfortunate big game would have if it wasn't for matrimonial squabbles! Oh, what am I saying?"

And with a little cry, as if suddenly she had been startled from sleep, she looked up at Nat standing there, a bewildered and embarrassed young man with a determined jaw, a bronzed face, very white teeth, and eyes which had the honesty of an extremely intelligent and faithful dog.

"I guess you're saying the truth," Nat ventured. "And it's bully of you to talk to me like this. And I'd like to say that I'm no end sorry——"

"But you mustn't believe all that," Julia Ebbesbourne protested.

"One's got to believe the truth, I reckon."

"But perhaps it isn't. You don't know me, you see, and I don't know you. If you told me things——"

"May I?" Nat said.

She nodded. She had regained her composure now, the little handkerchief had disappeared, but her eyes still held tears and there was still the faintest quaver in her voice.

"There's so darn little to tell," Nat found himself saying, but not unwillingly. Somehow he'd like her to know a bit about himself. It would put them more on a level, "You see, I've been on my own a fairish lot. My people went and died on me just as I was going to college, and then it panned out father didn't leave more'n enough to buy a week's cereals. So I had to get a job pretty quick. And I did. That was ten years back—I'm twenty-six now—and——"

"But what are you doing in London? Playing knight-errant in the fog?" asked the lady. And she seemed intensely curious for his reply, for curiosity was one of her foibles. It was curiosity, perhaps, which had brought her to this moment. She wanted to find out things for herself; rather dangerous things. But always she had been honest, and always—though not until that evening did she realize it—had she been sentimental; but not always had she been wise.

" You see, I had a dandy piece of luck come my way. Last June——"

Suddenly the lady held up her hand in a gesture of command. " Hush ! " she whispered.

And Nat, silent at her bidding, heard the sound of footsteps coming up the stairs. Then the door was pushed open and through it came a man whom Nat instantly recognized as the original of the photograph in the onyx frame.

A moment the man stood still, and completely motionless. It was as if he were frozen to rigidity, then : " Good God ! You, Julia," he muttered, and passed his hand across his forehead as if he couldn't really believe in what he saw.

And of course it was odd, as Julia Ebbesbourne realized instantly. That she should be sitting over the fire with a strange young man in an otherwise deserted house. And if it hadn't been for her curiosity regarding that young man she would have been out in the fog five minutes ago, almost back at the Ritz, where she was staying. And she wouldn't have come here at all if it hadn't been for mere sentiment. But what did one mean by mere sentiment ?

All this flashed through her mind in the second before she answered with, she felt herself, astonishing calm : " I came to fetch something, Alec."

And he didn't believe her. She saw that by the light in his eyes. They had gone hard ; yet at the moment when he had entered the room, when he had seen her rather than this American whom she had called a knight-errant, there had been in them another sort of look. A glad, delighted look.

" I am sorry I have disturbed you. I apologize," he said, in that queer pompous way which once had given her amusement—when she could laugh at him for it, and he would join in her laughter. It was different now.

" Oh, don't be ridiculous, Alec," she said impetuously, and she got to her feet with a swift movement. " Of course you're not disturbing me. I've done what I wished to do. We were just going."

" Exactly—we," Ebbesbourne said.

" This gentleman—whom, by the way, I never saw until a quarter of an hour ago——"

" Sure thing," Nat asserted, and looked directly, rather gloweringly, at the man who still stood in the doorway.

" For the moment, Julia, I prefer to leave him out of the matter," Ebbesbourne said, " Later——"

He paused involuntarily, as Nat, suddenly flushed and tense, made a movement towards him. " What the hell d'you mean ? " he demanded.

A moment the elder man surveyed him, then : " I think it is for you to make the explanation later. I prefer that my wife——"

" Alec ! " Julia Ebbesbourne's voice cut in. " This is perfectly idiotic. Listen ! Listen ! I tell you we never met until a quarter of an hour ago. He helped me to open the door, the key stuck. I've not the remotest idea who he is."

" And you've got to believe it ! " Nat said slowly. " D'you see ? Got to ber-lieve it."

And things looked what is called ugly. Julia realized that. She saw that these two men were losing their control ; that unless she did something, said something, to stop them, it would be a question of fisticuffs. A horrible, senseless business. She knew that her husband was roused to the depths ; his temples had gone white—a familiar sign ; that absurd pomposity of his had vanished, and with its going his determination had hardened. He and the young man began to raise their voices.

AND suddenly once more there came the sound of footsteps on the stairs. Heavy and slow.

" Hush ! " Julia cried. " Someone's coming. Hush ! "

And as she spoke the figure of a policeman appeared in the frame of the open doorway. He stood there blinking a little in the light, which gleamed on his mackintosh, wet with the fog.

It was Lord Ebbesbourne who broke the silence.

" Anything wrong, constable ? " he asked.

" I 'opes not, my lord," the policeman answered. " But I wasn't sure. I found the door on the latch and the lights on, and 'aving 'eard the place was h'unoccupied I come in, and then 'earing voices, my lord——"

" No wonder you thought something was wrong," Julia threw in. " Lord Ebbesbourne was having the most terrific—and fantastic—argument."

" Then that's all clear, my lord," said the policeman, and appeared about to go, when Nat stepped forward.

" One minute, Bobby," he said. " I think you can help in this show."

" Me, sir ? " The policeman looked more puzzled than ever and stared at Nat closely. Then a gleam of recognition came into his eyes, reddened by the fog. " Excuse me, sir, but ain't you the Yankee gentleman what spoke to me in the Square ? "

" Yep," Nat agreed, and then, holding up his hand to silence Lord Ebbesbourne from the protest which evidently he was about

"Excuse me, sir," said the policeman, "but ain't you the Yankee gentleman who spoke to me in the Square?"

to make: "I'd be darned grateful if you'd repeat just exactly what I said."

The policeman glanced from Ebbesbourne to his wife, uncertain, but when the lady smiled and nodded at him he supposed it was all right.

"Well, my lady," he began, hitching back his cape from his shoulders, "this gentleman comes up to me out of the fog and asks where 'e might be, and I told 'im Berkeley Square. But that didn't seem to mean what you might call anything. Nor did Piccadilly. And then 'e says as 'ow 'e'd only just come over from New York, and this was 'is first night in London. After that we chatted a bit, and presently 'e went off, and——"

"He said that this was the first time he had ever been in London?" Ebbesbourne put in deliberately.

"'E did, my lord."

"Thank you, that's all we wanted to know, constable," Ebbesbourne said, and then, to the surprise of everyone in the room, put out his hand to Nat.

The door closed behind the glistening figure of the policeman and his footsteps echoed ponderously, descending the stairs. The three people left in the little panelled room stood silent. The tension of the queer scene they had enacted was relaxed, but obviously none of them was at ease.

IT was Nat who broke the silence.

"I reckon I'd best be getting along too," he said, but the words were against his inclination and his instinct. For he had no desire to leave the lady who had called him knight-errant, who had told something of her story, who had roused in him compassion and chivalry and all the rest of it. Yet clearly it wasn't his affair. After all, this guy who was her husband knew her story too; he had played a part in it—pretty rottenly, in Nat's opinion. And yet it seemed that the lady still viewed him with what she called sentiment.

"I hope," she said evenly, "that you will not lose your way again, and if you do that you will escape any more adventures."

"I'm not complaining," Nat grinned, and he went towards the chair where she was seated. She rose at his approach, smiling adorably, and as she did so the brocaded bag which was on her lap slid to the floor, and from the pocket slipped out the photograph of her husband and lay face upwards on the carpet. "Oh!" she cried.

At the little exclamation Ebbesbourne swung round from an abstracted contemplation of the fire. His glance fell on the photograph, and, before Nat could do so, he stooped to pick it up. But he did not give it to her. Instead he held the frame in his hand, staring at it. Then he looked at his wife questioningly.

"I came to fetch it. That was why I broke into my own house," Julia said, and there was a tremor in her voice, perhaps of anger, perhaps of some different emotion.

And then quickly, as if she were anxious to dismiss the matter: "Which reminds me, Alec, you have not explained *your* reason for coming here."

For what seemed a long time he did not answer. It was obvious that he was considering what he should say very carefully. For the first time in their brief acquaintance Nat liked the look of him, for now there was no trace of pomposity or of arrogance on his features.

"I came for this," Ebbesbourne said at last, and putting his hand into the pocket of the overcoat he was wearing he drew out a photograph of his wife in an onyx frame.

Julia clasped her hands together with a little cry.

"You came for that?" she said. "You wanted a silly piece of cardboard too? Oh, my dear! How absurd, how sentimental—how lovely!"

Then it was that Nat turned, crept out of the room, down the stairs, across the hall with its blazing lights, and out into the fog.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in the Psychic Museum.

THE WORLD'S HAPPIEST MUSEUM

Through a Room of Miracles with

Sir A. Conan Doyle

By LEONARD CROCOMBE

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE thought "The World's Happiest Museum" a happy title for these pages when I mentioned it. "If," he added, "it is not too much like propaganda." For, when assenting to the Editor's request that he should act as my guide through the Psychic Museum, he wished it made clear that the interview was not to be considered as propaganda for Spiritualism and psychic phenomena. That was not his object in giving me this interview for the Magazine with which he has been associated as a leading contributor since the year of its foundation.

Why the world's *happiest* museum? The answer will be plain when you have read about its contents.

To reach this room of miracles you enter the Psychic Book Shop and Library, facing Westminster Abbey. Sir Arthur is proprietor of this shop, and beneath it is the

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long room in which he has arranged hundreds of objects, photographs, pictures—a thought-provoking record of certain phases of Spiritualist activities, and of the results of psychic research (between the two is an important difference), for the past fifty years or so.

"My Museum may be the smallest in London," Sir Arthur said, "but it is as large as any museum ever need be, for the visitor will have to give several hours to its exhibits if he wishes really to examine them all thoroughly. It is, also, unique. We can give the history of every single thing in it, and I do not think the most hardened sceptic could go over the exhibits and retain any doubt as to the continuity of our life after physical death. That is surely the core of every religion, and my little Museum must be doing good work if it proves our survival of bodily death. What is there even in our big brother in Bloomsbury which is so important as that?"

It should, perhaps, be explained that the exhibits may be divided into two sections: one, those with a definite evidential value; two, those which, although non-evidential, are of interest for the stories attaching to them or—as in the case of a number of paintings — because they illustrate vividly certain dramatic aspects of psychic phenomena, the scientific accuracy of which can be tested elsewhere by all who care to seek advice in the Library above the Museum.

Let us, then, examine first some of the things which can be labelled evidential. To me the most dramatic exhibit of this class is the enlargement of the actual photograph of Sir William Crookes, F.R.S., arm-in-arm with the materialized spirit of Katie King. (No. 1.)

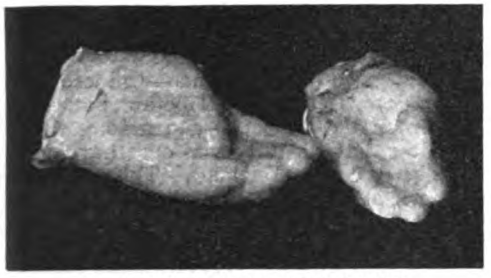
1.—THE MOST REMARKABLE SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPH EVER TAKEN.

Professor Sir William Crookes arm-in-arm with the materialized spirit of Katie King. This is one of the forty-four photographs taken, under the strictest of scientific test-conditions, by the great scientist in his own laboratory.

Sir Arthur's remarks on this wonderful exhibit were: "This photograph is an enlarged copy of the one taken by Sir William Crookes in his own laboratory more than fifty years ago. It is one of the forty-four which Crookes took. Here is another one in which Katie is seen entering the room, together with a letter of Crookes' in which he shows that Katie and the medium, Florence Cook, were two separate and distinct people. When one considers that Crookes' observations of Miss Cook extended for over three years and were conducted in his own house, I cannot imagine how any reasonable being can doubt the truth of them."

Dipping for a moment into Crookes' "Researches," we find the following paragraphs regarding this vivid photograph on the Museum walls:—

"One of the most interesting of the pictures is one in which I am standing by the side of Katie; she has her bare foot upon a particular part of the floor. Afterwards I dressed Miss Cook like Katie, placed her and myself in exactly the same position, and we were photographed by the same cameras, placed exactly as in the other experiment, and illuminated by the same light. When these two pictures are placed over each other, the two photographs of myself coincide exactly as regards stature, etc., but Katie is half a head taller than Miss Cook, and looks a big woman in comparison with her. In the breadth of her face, in many of the pictures, she differs essentially in size from her medium, and the photographs show several other points of difference. . . . I have the most absolute certainty that Miss Cook and Katie are two separate individuals so far as their bodies are concerned. Several little marks on



2.—THE SPIRIT "GLOVES."

These and other paraffin wax moulds were made by a materialized spirit who plunged his hand into a bucket of warm paraffin, in the presence of Dr. Geley and Professor Richet, the eminent French psychic investigators. The spirit hand dematerialized after the wax had solidified. Every attempt to duplicate these moulds by normal means has failed.

Miss Cook's face are absent on Katie's. Miss Cook's hair is so dark a brown as almost to appear black; a lock of Katie's which is now before me, and which she allowed me to cut from her luxuriant tresses, having first traced it up to the scalp and satisfied myself that it actually grew there, is a rich golden auburn.

"On one evening I timed Katie's pulse. It beat steadily at seventy-five, whilst Miss Cook's pulse a little time after was going at its usual rate of ninety. On applying my ear to Katie's chest I could hear a heart beating rhythmically inside, and pulsating even more steadily than did Miss Cook's heart when she allowed me to try a similar experiment after the *séance*. Tested in the same way, Katie's lungs were found to be sounder than her medium's, for at the time I tried my experiment Miss Cook was under medical treatment for a severe cough."

Well may the great scientist conclude that chapter with the words: "To imagine, I say, the Katie King of the last three years to be the result of imposture does more violence to one's reason and common sense than to believe her to be what she herself affirms."

3.—THE SYRIAN VASE.

"It came down suddenly, inexplicably, on a séance table." The medium was an amateur, a poor woman, who gave away all the apports produced through her psychic powers.

Next in dramatic as well as evidential value I place the now famous wax moulds or "gloves" of spirit hands. (No. 2.)

"You will see," Sir Arthur explained, "that the wrists are smaller than the breadth of the hands, so that the hands could not have been extricated from the moulds save by dematerialization. I defy anyone to suggest any other way. Houdini, the conjurer, and Sir Arthur Keith, a great anatomist, have both tried their skill, and the results, laboriously produced, have only served to accentuate the unique character of that which they tried to copy. And, of course, it must be remembered that men of scientific repute—Richet, Geley, and the Count de Gramont—superintended the whole experiment. On the wall there is a picture illustrating the occasion on which these wax moulds were obtained. The medium was an amateur, Franek Kluski, of Warsaw. When you have the palpable proof of the wax 'gloves' on the one side, and the evidence of such expert witnesses as Richet, Geley, and de Gramont on the other, I think the case is proved."

There is space to tell only very briefly and incompletely how these wax gloves, and others, were obtained. Dr. Geley, of the Institut Métapsychique, Paris, and Professor Richet had prepared a bucket of warm paraffin, and upon the appearance of a materialized figure—that of a smallish man—the request was made that the spirit should plunge his hand into the bucket and then withdraw it, so that when it dematerialized a cast of the hand would be left on the table, like a glove of solidified paraffin, so narrow at the wrist that the hand could not have been withdrawn by any possible normal means without breaking the mould. Dr. Geley writes, after proving that none of the sitters made the gloves:—

"Finally, there is the hypothesis that the gloves were brought by the medium. This is disproved by the fact that we secretly introduced chemicals* into the melted wax, and that these were found in the

* Cholesterin.

gloves. The report of the expert modellers on the point is categorical and final. . . ."

While I have been making my notes on the gloves, my guide has been fingering the large vase illustrated on the previous page. (No. 3.)

"This room is full of incredible things," he said, when I rejoined him. "Things which, in the old days, would have been called miracles, or the results of miracles. A miracle, now and always, is simply the intrusion of some natural force which we do not yet understand. That is why it is incorrect to use the words 'supernatural' or 'supernormal' in connection with these manifestations of powers of whose methods we are as yet ignorant. Everything in Nature is 'natural' and 'normal,' whether we understand it or not. We can show you results here before we can accurately explain their causes."

(I was not quite sure whether or not we were touching on that propaganda, so I took the vase without comment.)

"Yes, now examine this big jug, or vase," Sir Arthur continued. "It came down suddenly, inexplicably, on a *séance* table.

4.—A DRAMATIC PORTRAIT.

Dr. Geley photographed a few days after his death. His face can be clearly seen above the three seated figures, all experienced psychic investigators. In the top right-hand corner is part of a secret mark made on the negative by the manufacturer before it was packed.

"This is what we call an apport—the French word for something brought. Apport phenomena are the bringing of objects—live birds and fish, fresh fruit, dew-laden flowers, coins—all manner of things!—from a distance, through walls, closed windows, locked doors, and so on, into the midst of a group of sitters. Darkness is not always essential, neither is a *professional* apport medium necessary.*

"No one could say that the medium had this large jug hidden upon her person," Sir Arthur continued. "I happen to know a good deal about the medium. She was an amateur. From first to last she—or, rather, the spirits who used the psychic power she supplied—brought through about two thousand objects of various kinds—Chinese and Indian lamps, amulets, Tibetan pots—all manner of queer things—and among them all I do not think there was one that could have been got in England. This jug, for example, is Syrian ware. She was quite a poor woman, but she would not sell her apports. She just left them with the sitters. Of course, it is all very fantastic, but it is true."

Sir Arthur next called my attention to a number of smaller apports which appeared in his own presence under test conditions. We are, be it remembered, still considering only the exhibits of evidential value.

"This pile of Turkish pennies," said Sir Arthur; "there are about thirty of them. They all crashed down on the table during a test sitting I arranged in Melbourne. Now, you might hunt Australia from coast to coast and you would not find a Turkish penny. How, then, could the medium have got these? We asked the question of the medium's 'control' and were told that they had been brought from a well in Asia Minor. They had been hidden behind some bricks and were part of the hoard of some poor peasant who had probably been murdered. Such was the story; but, of course, there was no proof at all of their origin except, perhaps, the very slight corroboration provided by the fact that some of the coins have, as you see, got verdigris upon them, which seems to show that they had been in a damp place.

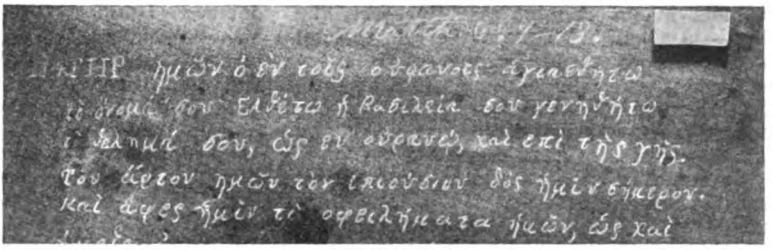
"The only thing that is perfectly certain is that they were not on the medium's body, for I stripped and searched him; also, such coins, as I have said, could not be got in Australia.

"It is easy to make fun of such things,

* I have had an apport brought to me, in twilight, through a mediumistic friend who is not a professional medium, and who is not even a Spiritualist.—L. C.

but facts are facts, and it is impossible to explain them.

"This other exhibit—a Babylonian clay tablet—fell upon the table during the same sitting. The inscription on it is, I think, correct. The control seemed to be a very wise spirit, who discoursed in a most learned manner upon Assyrian and Roman antiquities and psychic science, so I asked him how an apport was brought. The spirit's answer was :—



5.—DIRECT SPIRIT WRITING.

Portion of a passage in ancient Greek, every accent being correct, produced on a slate in the presence of a medium who knew no Greek.

"'It involves some factors which are beyond your human science and which could not be made clear to you. At the same time you may take as a rough analogy the case of water which is turned into steam. Then this steam, which is invisible, may be conducted elsewhere to be reassembled as visible water.'

"I should add that I had the tablet tested at the British Museum and that it was pronounced to be a forgery. Upon further inquiry it was ascertained that these forged tablets are made by certain Jews in a suburb of Bagdad, and, so far as is known, only there. The matter is not much further advanced, therefore. To the transporting agency it is at least possible that the forged tablet, steeped in recent human magnetism, is more easily handled as an apport than a genuine one taken from a mound. This same medium had, at one time or another, brought not less than a hundred of these imitation Babylonian tablets through.

"But that is enough about apports. Of course, one has to look out for frauds. That applies to every form of mediumship—and to other human activities. Take your own profession; we have had dishonest journalists. You are a journalist, but, so far as I know"—here Sir Arthur thoughtfully collected those Turkish coins and replaced them under lock and key—"you are an honest man. Still, the other day the Spiritualists caught an apport 'medium,' whose claims were being investigated, with small stones stuck by plaster behind his ears. We've no use for that sort of 'apport' merchant; the conjurers can have him!

"One must not be credulous. But one must not be too incredulous. The man who believes nothing is just as foolish as the man who believes everything. Test and ponder each case for yourself, comparing it with the results of others. There are rogues in psychic circles, as there are in more mundane circles, but the true mediums, amateur and professional, far outnumber them. By the way, one of the best apport mediums in this country will never accept payment for a sitting. If he could do by trickery the marvellous things he does through his psychic power he would be making a large income on the stage. Curious, isn't it?

"But in these days the gifts of the Spirit are becoming more mental and less physical. They are refining all the time. The coarser phenomena were mere signals to attract our attention. We have hardly a single good materialization medium in England now, while we have many excellent clairvoyants."

We next turned our attention to some finger-prints recorded, by request, by spirits who rapped with materialized fingers on a piece of smoked glass. This exhibit is of evidential value owing to the fact that the finger-prints of everyone present were carefully taken immediately after the *séance*. Finger-prints do not lie, and if you visit the Museum and compare the spirit finger-prints with those of the sitters you will find proof of the fact that the former were not made by any of the sitters. Who, then, did imprint them upon that piece of smoked glass?

Sir Arthur next told me the facts concerning some of the most striking of the many spirit photographs in his Museum.

But to digress for a moment, I feel I should first report this; you ought to know it.

"Those spirit photographs, now," said THE STRAND photographer, as we drove away. "I know how they're done! I've examined some through my magnifying glass. They superimpose another portrait on the negative before they use it. I've seen the marks."

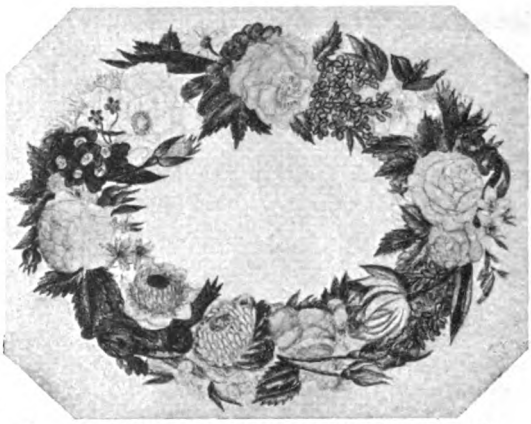
Well, well, well! Now, here is a man with knowledge that some of the best scientific brains in the world are searching for, and

he lets it out calmly, casually—just like that—in a taxi! I have urged him to send a full report of his discovery to every important scientific body! And he will, doubtless, also explain how it is that the spirit faces are so often recognized by sitters as those of dead relatives!

So now that at last we know exactly how spirit photographs are produced, let us examine one or two of those in the Museum.

Sir Arthur handed me a group photograph of Mrs. Hewat McKenzie, Hon. Secretary of the British College of Psychic Science, Mr. Stanley de Brath, M.Inst.C.E., and Miss Scatcherd, all for many years experienced investigators. (No.4.)

"Dr. Gustave Geley, who had probably gone as deeply as anyone into psychic science—his great book, 'From the Unconscious to the Conscious,' will probably stand the test of time—had arranged to sit with Mr. Hope, the photographic medium of Crewe, for a portrait on which he hoped to obtain what is called a spirit 'extra.'



6.—"PAINTED" IN SEVENTEEN SECONDS.

This complex design was precipitated upon the blank paper in seventeen seconds! The original is strikingly coloured.

"Immediately before the date fixed for the sitting, Dr. Geley was killed in an aeroplane accident. That was on July 15th, 1924. The *séance* with Mr. Hope was nevertheless held on the appointed day, and, as will be seen, Dr. Geley, too, kept his appointment, for his face can be very clearly seen above the sitters. In the top right-hand corner can be seen also part of the secret mark made by the manufacturers on the negatives before they were packed, in order to prove that the same negatives were used, and there is a certificate that the medium was never allowed to handle them. Readers desiring the full details will find them in *Psychic Science* of October, 1924, and in the *Revue Métapsychique* for the same month."

Two large photographs which every visitor to the Museum should inspect closely are of a Mr. Walker of Derbyshire. One shows him as he was on earth and one as a spirit; the features are identical. This Mr. Walker was a friend of W. T. Stead, and he went with the great journalist to bid him good-bye before his voyage on the doomed *Titanic*. Stead's last words to Mr. Walker were: "I will try to keep you posted." After the sinking of the *Titanic*, and the drowning of Stead, Mr. Walker went to be photographed by Mr. Hope of Crewe. In the portrait then taken can be seen, written round Mr. Walker's head, the last words he heard Stead utter: "I will try to keep you posted," followed by the signature "W. T. Stead." And the writing is undoubtedly the same as Stead's.

Sir Arthur related the sequel to this. Mr. Walker died and his family then assembled at Mr. Hope's studio, hoping for a spirit portrait of him. They got it. Inspection will show that the spirit head is an almost exact "double" of the photograph of Mr. Walker taken during his life here, and round which Stead wrote his evidential message.

Sir Arthur called my attention to one of the many interesting documents framed on the walls. "Here is a letter from Oscar Wilde written to me in his lifetime. Below you see a written communication from him many years after his death. It came by automatic writing through the hand of Mrs. Hester Dowden, the psychic daughter of the eminent Shakespearean scholar. Now look at the signature: look at the fine points of resemblance in the two scripts. When, in addition, one learns that the complete manuscript, which your readers can get under the title of 'Psychic Messages of Oscar Wilde,' is full of characteristic prose, and contains numerous little-known allusions to his own life, one surely must admit that it is difficult to explain the facts save by the hypothesis that it is actually Wilde who is behind it.

"Over there you can examine portions of the original automatic script given through the hand of the Rev. G. Vale Owen and published in his wonderful volumes, 'The Life Beyond the Veil.'

"This slate, on the other hand, bears evidential testimony to the fact that there is such a phenomenon as *direct* spirit writing. The passage is ancient Greek, and was produced on the slate in the presence of the medium Slade in 1876. Slade was not

7.—A SEASCAPE BY A WOMAN WHO CANNOT PAINT!

This vivid picture was painted by a medium with no knowledge of art. She paints while under spirit control and will not sell her work.

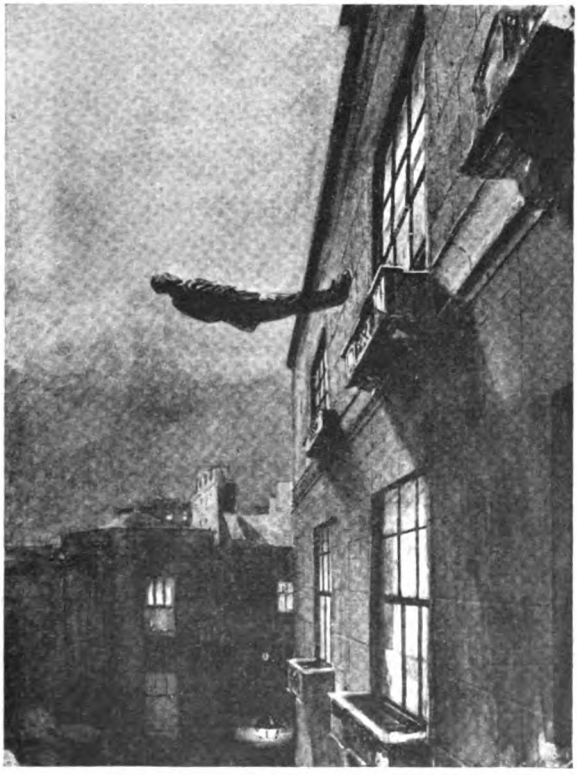
well-educated and knew no Greek. Authorities on Greek assert that only a great scholar could have placed the accents correctly, as they are placed on this slate. (No. 5.)

"Now look at these complex flower designs." Sir Arthur pointed to the beautifully-coloured wreath reproduced on the previous page. (No. 6.)

"This design is a specimen of yet another phase of psychic phenomena called 'precipitations.'

"How long do you suppose this intricate design took to do? A matter of hours, certainly, one would say. Well, as a fact it was done completely in seventeen *seconds!* Naturally, we cannot expect everyone to believe that! Still, when we look at the corner of the paper we see the names of all the witnesses—reputable people in their day.

"By some power which we can only vaguely call psychic, the whole picture was thrown in those few seconds upon the paper. Incredible, of course—but perfectly true none the less!"



8.—ONE OF DANIEL DUNGLAS HOME'S MANY MIRACLES.

In the presence of three witnesses, D. D. Home was levitated, while entranced, and went rapidly head first out of a third-floor window, returning by another window on the same floor.

In the top left-hand corner of this "precipitation" the following is written:—

"We whose names are hereto appended do certify that we were present and witnessed the production of the picture in seventeen seconds. Done on Saturday, April 13th, 1861, through the mediumship of Mrs. E. J. French in New York."

Among the five signatories was Judge Edmonds, of the Supreme Court of New York.

"Now this," said Sir Arthur, pointing to a striking seascape (No. 7), "is what I should call a specimen of the higher mediumship. This water-colour was done by a woman who had no knowledge of art, but who was controlled or obsessed from time to time, according to her own account, by the spirit of a Dutch water-colour painter. I came across her in Los Angeles. She is not allowed to sell the splendid results of her

obsessions, but she gave me this picture. Did you ever see such a sense of movement in a seascape? And yet normally she could hardly draw or paint at all."

There are, unfortunately, limits to the length of this report; and it must, of necessity, be somewhat scrappy. Accounts of some of the most outstanding exhibits having evidential value have been given; from a mass of notes I find it difficult to choose: things which thrill me may leave you cold.

Reference should undoubtedly be made to the illustration of one of D. D. Home's miracles. (No. 8.) The picture is non-evidential, of course; but evidence enough to satisfy most people capable of forming a judgment on the considered statements of others will be found in the Earl of Dunraven's book, "Experiences in Spiritualism with D. D. Home." Home, while entranced, told his friends not to be afraid, and then went out of the room, which was on the third floor. He was heard to throw the window up in the next room, and presently he was seen to be floating in the air outside. He then opened the window and walked in quite coolly. A few moments later he repeated the manifestation, going through the open window "head first, quite rapidly, his body being nearly horizontal and apparently rigid. He came in again feet foremost."

9.—THE TREE SPIRIT.

The queer little fellow leaning against the tree is, Sir Arthur says, a tree spirit. Another plate was exposed at the same spot two seconds later, but the fairy had disappeared, seemingly frightened by the first click of the camera.

These extraordinary happenings took place at Ashley House, Victoria Street, on Sunday, December 13th, 1868. The witnesses were Lord Adare (afterwards Earl of Dunraven), the Hon. the Master of Lindsay, and Captain Charles Wynne. "All honourable men," as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle remarked. "And," he added, "there are more than a hundred instances of Home's levitation. It is strange how a Christian can say such things are utterly impossible and yet easily accept the account of St. Peter walking on the waves two thousand years ago. These psychic facts greatly reinforce the Biblical miracles, and some day the New Testament will be believed in, not in spite of but on account of the miracles."

I was looking through one of many albums of thought-provoking photographs when I came upon enlarged prints of the world-famous photographs of fairies which THE STRAND MAGAZINE introduced to an incredulous public.

"Fairies?" Sir Arthur echoed. "Well, we don't reckon them to be a part of Spiritualism, do we? But they are a part of the Universe, although they have no connection with human evolution. These little creatures are separated from us only by a very slight difference of vibration, which can readily be pierced by the clairvoyant, and occasionally—as in the instances when these photographs were taken by those small girls—needs no piercing at all.

"The Cottingley fairies have held their own entirely and there has never been any damaging criticism at all. The two girls were perfectly honest and the photographs are unquestionably genuine. The negatives have stood every expert test.

"Here you see another fairy photograph (No. 9), which came from an adult source. It was taken in Devonshire a couple of years ago. The queer little fellow seen leaning against the tree is a tree spirit. We have always been told that they draw their strength from trees while leaning against them, also that they preserve a semi-wooden appearance. You get both conditions in this photograph."

We left the fairies and returned to our talk of things spiritual and psychic. We both for a moment forgot our resolution against propaganda when I asked Sir Arthur for a word or two which I could pass on to those who sometimes ask me urgent questions by no means easy to answer. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's words will form a fitting epilogue to this account of my visit to the World's Happiest Museum:—

"Fresh evidence for our survival of bodily death and for Spirit return, under certain conditions, is not needed. If only the existing evidence is examined it will be found to be overwhelmingly on the side of the angels. Unlike every hypothesis put forward by those who have proved the phenomena but are in doubt as to their origin, Spiritualism alone covers *all* the facts satisfactorily."

Thanksgiving

By

A. M. BURRAGE

Illustrated by
S. BRIAULT

HOWARD WEBBER hesitated in the act of saying "Good night" on the threshold of the Vicarage. He had not been asked to supper, and experience helped him to estimate the probable dullness of the meal which awaited him in his lodgings. He was therefore disposed to linger and chat, and thus give the Rev. Ainslie Frewen an opportunity of remedying the omission. The Vicarage had been almost a home to him even before he acquired the post of village schoolmaster.

"Well," he remarked, "another dull, dreary day almost at an end!"

Frewen smiled. He had that placid, confidential smile which goes so well with smooth white hair, a clear pale skin, and sharp, fastidiously carved features. There were enthusiastic women in the congregation who said that he was a saint; but it took most men some little time to assure themselves that he was not a bad fellow. He looked just then as if he were evolving some beautiful and poetic thought, whereas he was actually telling himself that he jolly well was not going to invite a third to attack a supply of cold beef hardly sufficient for two.

"It's been a beautiful day," he contradicted, with a faint air of rebuke.

Young Webber uttered a little jarring laugh of profound discontent.

"All right for you, I dare say. But then you haven't been teaching a lot of smelly kids the rivers and capes on the East Coast of Scotland."

"One finds most of one's duties disagreeable," said Frewen, hoping that the very triteness of the remark would drive his visitor to the gate.

"I hear Lady Cottfield's pretty seedy," Webber remarked, starting another hare. "Don't wonder at it, after the life she's led. She's whooped it up in her time pretty thoroughly, by all accounts. Some people *do* get all the fun, don't they? And here am I cooped up all day teaching the three R's to a pack of young yokels, with hardly enough money for beer and cigarettes, and no fun but a dance in the village hall about once a month."

Frewen chose to ignore all but the first half-dozen words. But the smile had left his keen, æsthetic face.

"I heard a rumour," he said, slowly and precisely, "that Lady Cottfield was ill, but I cannot say how ill, nor what is the matter with her. We see very little of her nowadays. As you know, she never comes to church, and her intercourse with my wife and myself has been limited to very infrequent calls."

"You always freeze up when I mention her," the young man complained. "No use trying to pretend that she hasn't been a rip. Well, I wish I had her money."

Frewen smiled again, and this time his smile was enigmatical. With one quick, comprehensive glance he surveyed this young man whom he knew so well. He had coached young Webber as a boy, taken him in during his holidays from the local Grammar School. Probably he knew young Webber better than anybody else in the world knew him, and experience had made him no mean judge of human nature. Howard Webber's clothes were cheap, but he contrived to look overdressed in them. From the toes of his brown brogue shoes to the crown of his hat there were signs of a pathetic striving after dandyism. His love of money and of wealthy people was no secret passion. He was for ever talking about money and the good things money can buy, and he had the weak mouth and the greedy eyes of the potential debauchee. But Frewen liked him and pitied him, for reasons which only Mrs. Frewen knew.

Howard Webber fidgeted, leaned on his bent cane, glanced around the garden, and

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then unwillingly muttered something to the effect that he would have to be going.

"Good night, old chap," said Frewen, heartily, and watched him down the garden to the clean white gate which gave access to the road.

"It's just as well, young man," he thought, "that you're kept poor and working tolerably hard. It's the best medicine for your complaint. If you had money you'd go straight to the devil and kill yourself inside three months. And the tragedy is that you may have some one of these days."

It was a perfect July evening, without a breath of air stirring. The shadows of the trees were already advancing across the Vicarage lawn, and the still shade lay like a coat of olive-coloured paint on a surface kept emerald green by a hydrant in the days of drought. The heat of the day was over and the flowers were breathing. The faint blended odours from a score of cunningly laid-out beds lured Frewen to wander round his garden.

He loved his garden, and did rather more than his share of the work in it. The carnations were late this year. They were his favourite flowers, and from day to day he had promised himself that they would be out. But still they were only buds bowing from the crests of slender sage-green stalks. He found one drooping and almost broken, and felt in his pocket for the tangled skeins of bass which he was always sure of finding there.

While he was tying it up he heard a car drive up and stop outside the gate. Then came footfalls and the creaking of the gate. Frewen looked up and beheld a man in a peaked cap whom he recognized at once as Lady Cottfield's chauffeur.

"Good evening, Harry," he called out.

The man shuffled towards him almost at a run.

"Good evening, sir. Her ladyship's compliments, and will you please come and see her at once?"

"At once?" echoed Frewen, doubtfully.

"If you please, sir. I've got the car here. Her ladyship is ill, sir."

"So I've heard. Nothing very serious, I trust?"

"That we don't know, sir. But my orders are to tell you that she needs you very urgently."

"Very well," said Frewen, without further hesitation, "I will come."

IT was a drive of only about five minutes to the grey Georgian house set in the middle of a small ring park. Frewen had plenty to think of on the way, and he half guessed the cause of this urgent summons. He had been of service to Lady Cottfield, but they had never been friends; indeed, she had few friends in the neighbourhood. During her husband's lifetime the County had been compelled to tolerate her for his sake. Since his death she had given it plenty of excuse for dropping her. She had not been born in the same rarefied atmosphere. Before her marriage she had been a singer known in more than one European capital. People hinted at a "past," but it was unnecessary to dig down very far to find scandal. Lady Cottfield's recent mode of life provided plenty of topics for whispered conversations. Even her son, the present baronet, now practising at the Bar in London, seldom came near her.

The butler was waiting for Frewen when he arrived, and he was taken straight to Lady Cottfield's bedroom. He found her sitting up in bed, with two restless hands playing with the coverlet. As he entered the room a grim, dark-headed maid rose from a chair beside the bed, and went quietly out.

Lady Cottfield indicated a chair without greeting.

"Sit down, Mr. Frewen," she said. "I want to talk, and talking tires me, so I want to be as brief as possible. I'm dying."

Frewen uttered a little shocked ejaculation, and gave a glance of concern at the bloated, florid countenance, on which the seal of dissipation was set even deeper than when he had last seen it. That glance was sufficient to tell him that she had probably spoken the truth, but he said:—

"Come now, Lady Cottfield, I sincerely hope——"

"You needn't hope," she interrupted. "I don't. Grevelle says I am. I know Grevelle's a fool who would probably kill the most robust patient that ever fell into his hands, but I don't want other advice, because I feel in myself that I'm going under. Well, I haven't sent for you to obtain sympathy or to be prayed over. If you start praying it will probably hasten my end. But you're the one man I can trust, and I believe you to be sufficiently sentimental to carry out a last request."

He could only bow. Lady Cottfield paused for breath. Then she said:—

"I suppose you've guessed who Howard Webber is?"

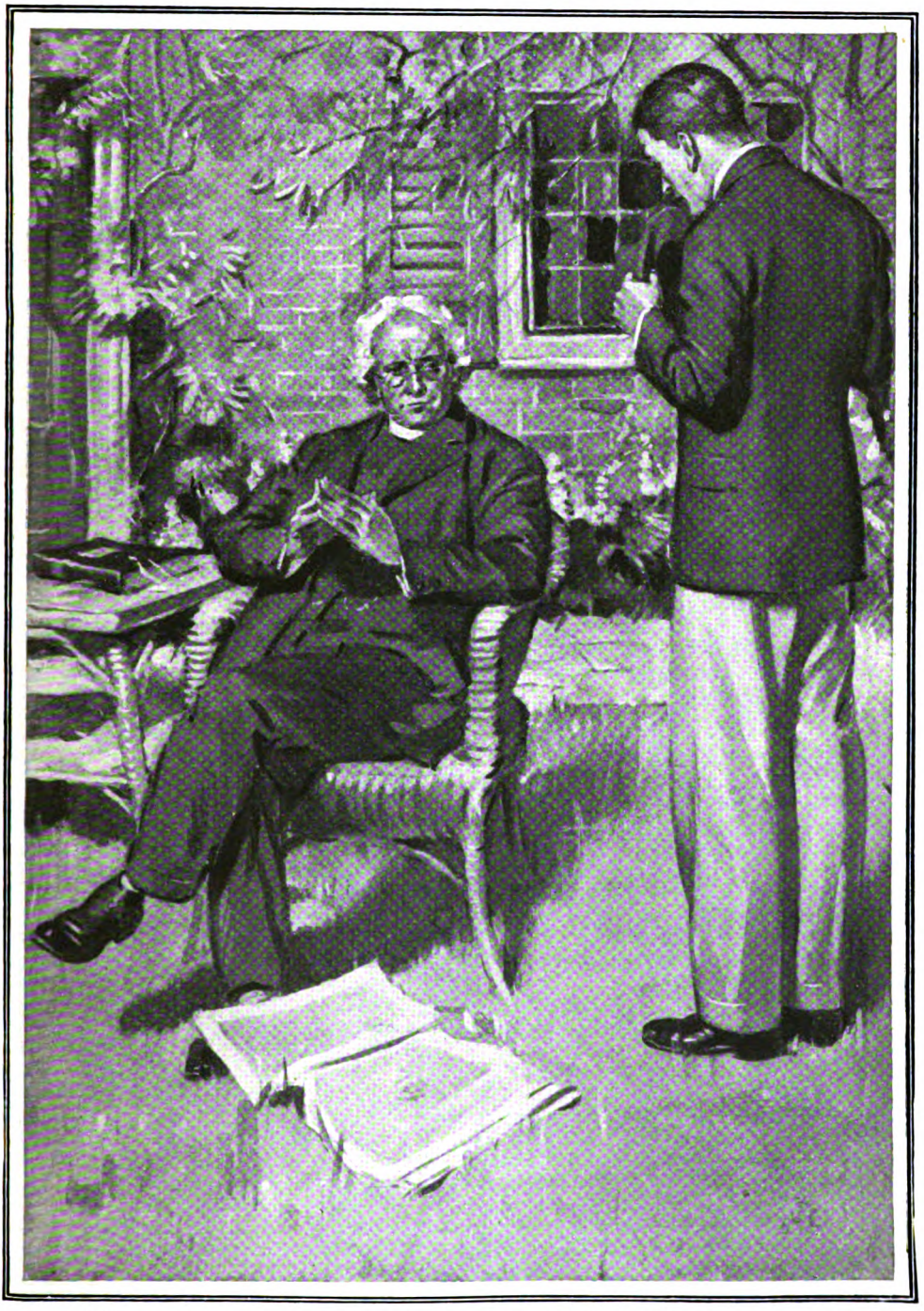
She saw him flinch and uttered a little dry laugh.

"Lady Cottfield," said Frewen, gently, "I think I know. But I always hated myself for thinking such a thing. Still, your interest in the boy, your giving me the money for his education——"

"Such as it was!"

"——your wanting him near you——"

"Oh, you're quite right," she interrupted.



"You always freeze up when I mention Lady Cottfield," the young man complained. "No use trying to pretend that she hasn't been a rip. Well, I wish I had her money."

"He's my son. You're the only living man who knows. My husband never knew, of course. I suppose I went to him neither better nor worse than most women, if men only knew. I always meant to marry well, and for that good reason I kept the wrong sort at arm's length. There was only that one. His name doesn't matter. I've buried that with him. Howard is never to know."

Frewen inclined his head.

"I had one chink in my moral armour," the woman continued, "while I was waiting for the man who could give me money and a title. I couldn't resist diamonds. Howard's father was clever enough to find that out. Will you kindly feel under my pillow? You'll find a case——"

He did as he was bidden, and stood looking at the polished red leather.

"Open it," Lady Cottfield commanded.

HE snapped it open and stared half bemused at a necklace which shimmered and twinkled in the late sunlight.

"That was the price of my virtue," she said, with half a sneer. "To those stones Howard owes his existence. And now I want to explain. I can't leave Howard a penny. My money is tied up so that when I die it all goes to my—to my legitimate son."

"Your—the boy's father is dead, you said?"

"Yes; he was a thief and a swindler, and he died in prison. He was a Frenchman, a cotton-broker who came to grief. I believe he spent the last of his money on me. Now listen. I want you to promise that you will take that necklace, sell it for what it will fetch, and give the money to Howard. Will you promise?"

Frewen hesitated.

"But, Lady Cottfield, it must be worth thousands—thousands!"

"So much the better for Howard."

Frewen leaned towards her. His voice shook a little.

"Lady Cottfield," he said, "I know that boy—and I still call him a boy, although he is turned thirty—better than anybody else in this world knows him, and I tell you this, solemnly and sincerely, that if he were to receive a sum of thousands, or even hundreds, of pounds it would be his death and damnation. He is as weak as water and helplessly self-indulgent. Whenever he can scrape a pound or two together I know how he spends it. A large sum of money, a sum which he would call a fortune, would send him straight to the devil."

The woman on the bed uttered a laugh with an ugly sneer in it.

"I don't happen to believe in the devil," she said. "If I did I might look forward to my reunion with Howard in some less comfortable world."

"Lady Cottfield," cried Frewen, in deep distress, "remember you are dying!"

She sighed impatiently.

"I wish you would remember it too, and promise what I ask you without arguing."

"I can't."

"Very well. I shall send the necklace to Howard, together with the story of his birth. I am not concerned with what Howard does with the money. If he plays the fool with it, as you say he will, it is neither my affair nor yours. But it is quite clear that he has a moral, or immoral, right to that necklace, or the proceeds of it."

"The price of his mother's honour," said Frewen, bitterly.

"Most women who have been in my place," sneered the voice from the bed, "would tell you that I made a creditable bargain. But I don't want Howard to know. Let that count in my favour, if you will. Will you take the necklace, or must I send for him and tell him the truth in giving it to him?"

"You drive me very hard," he faltered.

"You make it necessary," she said.

He tried to collect the scattered fragments of the torn-up fabric of his argument.

"If I do as you ask, how shall I account for having such a sum of money to give him?"

"You need not account for it. Merely say that you are not permitted to tell him where it comes from. He may be curious, but he will consider the source of the money unimportant compared with the money itself, and I do not think he will trouble you too much."

"Lady Cottfield," Frewen urged, "before it is too late, I beg you to reconsider what you have asked me to do. Howard is quite safe while he is working hard for little money in a quiet village like ours. He is discontented, but he is not really unhappy. You have wronged him deeply enough already, and the best you can do for him now is to let him be. Let him have the handling of a large sum of money, and he will throw up his work to spend it, and be dead or derelict when it is gone. If you persist in this cruel kindness I can foresee no other end."

Lady Cottfield sighed, this time from sheer weariness.

"I am very tired," she said, "and I want to rest. I have talked too much. Will you take the necklace or must I send for Howard?"

Frewen hesitated, his face pinched and drawn. He was beaten. Indeed, he had had

"To those stones," she said, "Howard owes his existence. And now I want to explain."

no weapons with which to fight. He thought weakly of washing his hands of the affair, then he recognized his own cowardice, and turned quickly to the other alternative. Better, far better, that Howard should never know the truth.

"Very well," he said, unwillingly, "I will take the necklace, Lady Cottfield, and I will promise to sell it for the best price I can obtain and give the proceeds to Howard."

There was a pause. Lady Cottfield had closed her eyes. He bent over her.

"You want me to go," he said, gently, and laid his hand on the back of one of hers. "Good night."

He felt a faint responsive movement.

"Good-bye," corrected Lady Cottfield, in a weak voice.

Downstairs he refused the use of the car, offered him by Harry the chauffeur, and managed by an unwonted abruptness of manner to convince the man that he really preferred to walk. His brains were clouded and his heart was heavy.

It was the hour of sunset, and he passed out through the lodge gates into a dust-laden lane, cool now in the shadows, with shafts of ruddy light striking the hedge high above his head. In the lane he met a pair of lovers, walking at arm's length, as rustic lovers do until the twilight deepens. He knew them and exchanged greetings with them. They had been waiting a long time to get married, and were saving to buy furniture. And he could not help the thought that a little, a very little, of the money for which the necklace would be sold would be a blessing to these two young people.

He was haunted by a similar thought when he met old Jack Milsom, the shepherd, whose wife was sick, and Joe Gurney, who had a long family and had been out of work for months. Nor could he quite deafen his ears to the insinuating voice which told him that if he waited until Lady Cottfield was dead, and then gave out that she had instructed him to spend the proceeds of the necklace on the poor, nobody would be the wiser.

The case in his pocket seemed to weigh him down. The act of crossing the bridge near home suggested another solution, and he actually took the necklace from his pocket and dangled it over the parapet, hesitating like Bedivere with the sword Excalibur.

But all the while he knew that it was safe. A stronger and less moral man might have kept the money from Howard Webber, but only a much weaker man would have tossed it into the water. And he told himself that after all he was not Providence and had no right to assume it as certain that the money would be a curse to the weak and feckless fellow who was its rightful owner.

What irked him most was his sense of responsibility. He had to do something, and whatever he did must be, in some sense or another, wrong. Yet he did not see how he could have done otherwise than accept the responsibility. He had at least saved young Howard Webber from knowing the truth about his origin. Probably Webber guessed that he was illegitimate, but it would lend him no moral support to know the kind of reprobate he had for a mother, or to learn that his father was a thief and a swindler who had died in a French jail.

On his arrival home he locked the necklace away in the desk in his study, and went through into the dining-room.

"You're very late, dear," said little grey-haired Mrs. Frewen in her only tone of rebuke.

"Yes," he said, heavily, "and I'm very tired."

He sat down, and throughout the meal he threw quick, covert glances at her across the table. He was wondering how the necklace would have looked on her white throat twenty or thirty years ago.

THREE days later Lady Cottfield died, and four days afterwards Frewen performed the funeral service. He had decided that he would do nothing about the necklace until after the funeral—he told himself that there was a sort of decency in this—but he unlocked his desk and looked at it every day to make sure that it was still there.

It surprised him to discover after that week had elapsed that he was growing fond of the stones. He had heard of, but never previously understood, the fascination of gems for certain men and women. Now he could realize something of the strength of the temptation which the dead woman had not been able to withstand. He became painfully aware that he would hate parting from them; it was somehow so pleasant to feel that those beautiful stones were safe in his locked desk, to be taken out and looked at when he was quite alone.

He had, of course, decided what he must eventually do, but he found himself infirm of purpose. His first step was to get the necklace valued, but it would be useless to take it to the jeweller in the little town five miles away. Probably he had never before seen such stones, and he would be sure to gossip. No; he must take it to Carminster, where he was not known. Carminster was rather a long way off, and he assured himself that there was no need to make a special journey. After all,

what was the need for hurry? Sooner or later his own business affairs would take him to the cathedral city.

THE summer holidays came soon afterwards. Howard Webber drew his salary and went to Brighton. Frewen uttered a sigh of relief after he had gone. There was no need, he told himself, to take any steps towards disposing of the necklace for another six weeks.

But Howard Webber came back after one hectic week with bloodshot eyes, trembling hands, and empty pockets. The sight of him gave Frewen a strange revulsion of feeling.

"The longer I keep him waiting," he told himself, "the better for him. There is death for Howard in the price of those stones."

He had now taken to looking at the necklace half-a-dozen times a day—to make sure that it was safe. And always he told himself severely that he must do something about it next week. Invariably it was next week. But one day when old Dr. Grevelle came round with his car, saying that he was about to run into Carminster and asking if Frewen would like a lift, he found himself suddenly weak and ill. He thanked Dr. Grevelle and told him that he was too busy.

Five minutes later he was alone in his study, holding the necklace lovingly between his hands.

"Old Grevelle isn't too safe a driver," he muttered. "Wouldn't trust him in the traffic of Carminster."

Then, suddenly, he flung the necklace from him, as if it had come to life and squirmed in his hand. He dropped heavily on to his knees.

"Oh, God," he cried, "it isn't that! It isn't that! Why do I lie to myself? What are these cursed stones making of me? For cursed they are—the price of dishonour—a curse to me already—and what else will they be to poor Howard when—if——"

But his hand was forced only a few days later. Howard Webber came and asked to see him, wearing the sheepish and mysterious air of the prospective borrower. He spoke with something like a whine in his voice.

"I'm so awfully sorry to trouble you, vicar, but would you—*could* you—help me out of a mess? I made an awful fool of myself while I was at Brighton, and now I've got nothing at all to carry on with. I know you're not frightfully well off, but if you could possibly lend me twenty or thirty pounds——"

Frewen let him ramble on a little further. Then he said:—

"I'm afraid I haven't such a sum by me, but I'll see what I can do during the next few days. I'll let you know for certain tomorrow night."

When Webber was gone he dropped on to his knees and uttered a little prayer of thankfulness because now at last he was compelled to act.

ON the following night, after he had seen everything safe below, the little grey-spectacled man who was Carminster's principal jeweller went upstairs to his wife, who awaited him in the dining-room, which overlooked the High Street.

"I had such a curious experience this afternoon," he announced. "An old parson brought me a necklace which he asked me to value. I could tell from his manner that he set great store by it. I had to look at it twice myself, and then I told him that it might be worth twenty or thirty pounds, because the stones were such excellent imitations of diamonds.

"Well, he went as white as a sheet, and I heard him mutter something about 'the price of dishonour' and 'a thief and a swindler.' But here's the queerest part of all. Suddenly his face cleared and he smiled. And what do you think he said? He said 'Thank God!'—just like that, fervently, as if he meant it!"

NEXT MONTH:

"THOSE IN PERIL ON THE TEE,"

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

THE STORY OF WILLIAM

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

Illustrated by
CHARLES CROMBIE

MISS POSTLETHWAITE, our courteous and vigilant barmaid, had whispered to us that the gentleman sitting over there in the corner was an American gentleman.

"Comes from America," added Miss Postlethwaite, making her meaning clearer.

"From America?" echoed we.

"From America," said Miss Postlethwaite. "He's an American."

Mr. Mulliner rose with an old-world grace. We do not often get Americans in the bar-parlour of the Angler's Rest. When we do, we welcome them. We make them realize that Hands Across the Sea is no mere phrase.

"Good evening, sir," said Mr. Mulliner. "I wonder if you would care to join my friend and myself in a little refreshment?"

"Very kind of you, sir."

"Miss Postlethwaite, the usual. I understand you are from the other side, sir. Do you find our English countryside pleasant?"

"Delightful. Though, of course, if I may say so, scarcely to be compared with the scenery of my home State."

"What State is that?"

"California," replied the other, baring his head. "California, the Jewel State of the Union. With its azure sea, its noble hills, its eternal sunshine, and its fragrant flowers, California stands alone. Peopled by stalwart men and womanly women——"

"California would be all right," said Mr. Mulliner, "if it wasn't for the earthquakes."

Our guest started as though some venomous snake had bitten him.

"Earthquakes are absolutely unknown in California," he said, hoarsely.

"What about the one in 1907?"

"That was not an earthquake. It was a fire."

"An earthquake, I always understood," said Mr. Mulliner. "My Uncle William was out there during it, and many a time has he said to me, 'My boy, it was the San Francisco earthquake that won me a bride.'"

"Couldn't have been the earthquake. May have been the fire."

"Well, I will tell you the story, and you shall judge for yourself."

"I shall be glad to hear your story about the San Francisco fire," said the Californian, courteously.

MY Uncle William (said Mr. Mulliner) was returning from the East at the time. The commercial interests of the Mulliners have always been far-flung: and he had been over in China looking into the workings of a tea-exporting business in which he held a number of shares. It was his intention to get off the boat at San Francisco and cross the continent by rail. He particularly wanted to see the Grand Canyon of Arizona. And when he found that Myrtle Banks had for years cherished the same desire, it seemed to him so plain a proof that they were twin souls that he decided to offer her his hand and heart without delay.

This Miss Banks had been a fellow-traveller on the boat all the way from Hong-Kong; and day by day William Mulliner had fallen more and more deeply in love with her. So on the last day of the voyage, as they were steaming in at the Golden Gate, he proposed.

I have never been informed of the exact words which he employed, but no doubt they were eloquent. All the Mulliners have

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been able speakers, and on such an occasion he would, of course, have extended himself. When at length he finished, it seemed to him that the girl's attitude was distinctly promising. She stood gazing over the rail into the water below in a sort of rapt way. Then she turned.

"Mr. Mulliner," she said, "I am greatly flattered and honoured by what you have just told me." These things happened, you will remember, in the days when girls talked like that. "You have paid me the greatest compliment a man can bestow on a woman. And yet——"

William Mulliner's heart stood still. He did not like that "And yet——"

"Is there another?" he muttered.

"Well, yes, there is. Mr. Franklyn proposed to me this morning. I told him I would think it over."

There was a silence. William was telling himself that he had been afraid of that bounder Franklyn all along. He might have known, he felt, that Desmond Franklyn would be a menace. The man was one of those lean, keen, hawk-faced, Empire-building sort of chaps you find out East—the kind of fellow who stands on deck chewing his moustache with a far-away look in his eyes, and then, when the girl asks him what he is thinking about, draws a short, quick breath and says he is sorry to be so absent-minded, but a sunset like that always reminds him of the day when he killed the four pirates with his bare hands and saved dear old Tuppy Smithers in the nick of time.

"There is a great glamour about Mr. Franklyn," said Myrtle Banks. "We women admire men who do things. A girl cannot help but respect a man who once killed two sharks with a Boy Scout pocket-knife."

"So he says," growled William.

"He showed me the pocket-knife," said the girl, simply. "And on another occasion he brought down three lions with three successive shots."

William Mulliner's heart was heavy, but he struggled on.

"Very possibly he may have done these things," he said, "but surely marriage means more than this. I yield to no man in my respect for those who can kill sharks with pocket-knives, but I hold that other qualities are needed by the perfect husband. Personally, if I were a girl, I would go rather for a certain steadiness and stability of character. To illustrate what I mean, did you happen to see me win the Egg-and-Spoon race at the ship's sports? Now there, it seems to me, in what I might call microcosm, was an exhibition of all the qualities a married man most requires—intense coolness, iron resolution, and a quiet, unassuming courage. The man who under test conditions has carried an egg once and a half times round a deck in a small spoon is a man who can be trusted."

She seemed to waver, but only for a moment.

"I must think," she said. "I must think."

"Certainly," said William. "You will let me see something of you at the hotel, after we have landed?"

"Of course. And if—I mean to say, whatever happens, I shall always look on you as a dear, dear friend."

"M'yes," said William Mulliner.

FOR three days my Uncle William's stay in San Francisco was as pleasant as could reasonably be expected, considering that Desmond Franklyn was also stopping at his and Miss Banks's hotel. He contrived to get the girl to himself to quite a satisfactory extent; and they spent many happy hours together in the Golden Gate Park and at the Cliff House, watching the seals basking on the rocks. But on the evening of the third day the blow fell.

"Mr. Mulliner," said Myrtle Banks, "I want to tell you something."

"Anything," breathed William, tenderly, "except that you are going to marry that perisher Franklyn."

"But that is exactly what I was going to tell you, and I must not let you call him a perisher, for he is a very brave, intrepid man."

"When did you decide on this rash act?" asked William, dully.

"Scarcely an hour ago. We were talking in the garden, and somehow or other we got on to the subject of rhinoceroses. He then told me how he had once been chased up a tree by a rhinoceros in Africa and escaped by throwing pepper in the brute's eyes. He most fortunately chanced to be eating his lunch when the animal arrived, and he had a hard-boiled egg and the pepper-pot in his hands. When I heard this story, like Desdemona, I loved him for the dangers he had passed, and he loved me that I did pity them. The wedding is to be in June."

William Mulliner ground his teeth in a sudden access of jealous rage.

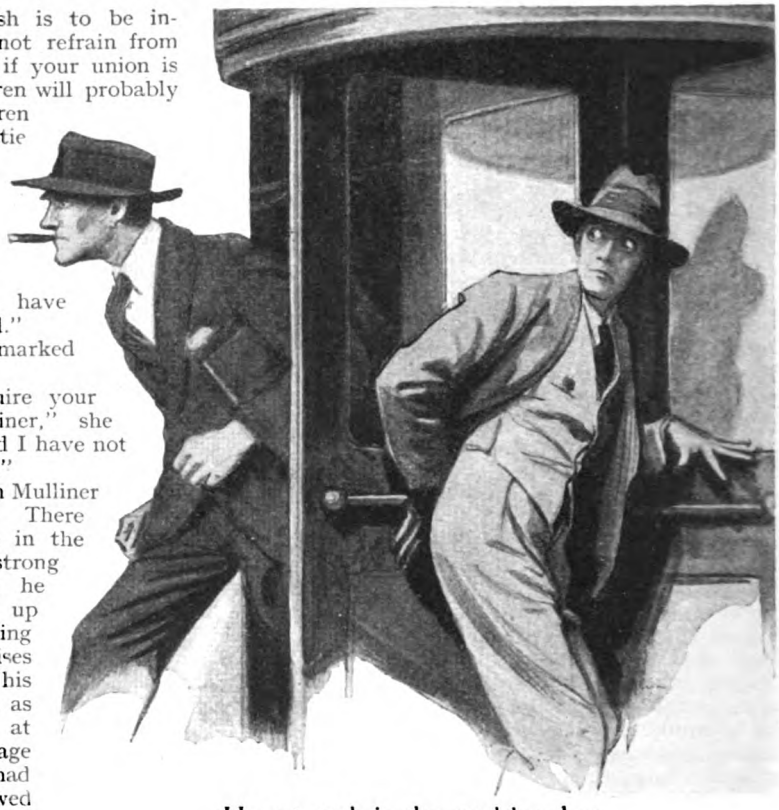
"Personally," he said, "I consider that the story you have just related reveals this man Franklyn in a very dubious—I might almost say sinister—light. On his own showing, the leading trait in his character appears to be cruelty to animals. The fellow seems totally incapable of meeting a lion or a rhinoceros or any other of our dumb friends without instantly going out of his way to inflict bodily injury on it. The last

thing I would wish is to be indelicate, but I cannot refrain from pointing out that, if your union is blessed, your children will probably be the sort of children who kick cats and tie tin cans to dogs' tails. If you take my advice, you will write the man a little note, saying that you are sorry but you have changed your mind."

The girl rose in a marked manner.

"I do not require your advice, Mr. Mulliner," she said, coldly. "And I have not changed my mind."

Instantly William Mulliner was all contrition. There is a certain stage in the progress of a strong man's love when he feels like curling up in a ball and making little bleating noises if the object of his affections so much as looks cross-eyed at him; and this stage my Uncle William had reached. He followed her as she paced proudly away through the hotel lobby, and stammered incoherent apologies. But Myrtle Banks was adamant.



He got stuck in the revolving door.

"Leave me, Mr. Mulliner," she said, pointing at the revolving door that led into the street. "You have maligned a better man than yourself, and I wish to have nothing more to do with you. Go!"

William went, as directed. And so great was the confusion of his mind that he got stuck in the revolving door and had gone round in it no fewer than eleven times before the hall-porter came to extricate him.

"I would have removed you from the machinery earlier, sir," said the hall-porter deferentially, having deposited him safely in the street, "but my bet with my mate in there called for ten laps. I waited till you had completed eleven so that there should be no argument."

William looked at him dazedly.

"Hall-porter," he said.

"Sir?"

"Tell me, hall-porter," said William, "suppose the only girl you had ever loved had gone and got engaged to another, what would you do?"

The hall-porter considered.

"Let me get this right," he said. "The proposition is, if I have followed you correctly, what would I do supposing the Jane on whom I had always looked as a steady mamma had handed me the old skimmer and told me to take all the air I needed because she had gotten another sweetie?"

"Precisely."

"Your question is easily answered," said the hall-porter. "I would go around the corner and get me a nice stiff drink at Mike's Place."

"A drink?"

"Yes, sir. A nice stiff one."

"At—where did you say?"

"Mike's Place, sir. Just round the corner. You can't miss it."

William thanked him and walked away. The man's words had started a new, and in many ways interesting, train of thought. A drink? And a nice stiff one? There might be something in it.

William Mulliner had never tasted alcohol in his life. He had promised his late mother that he would not do so until he was either twenty-one or forty-one—he could never remember which. He was at present twenty-nine; but, wishing to be on the safe

side in case he had got his figures wrong, he had remained a teetotaller. But now, as he walked listlessly along the street towards the corner, it seemed to him that his mother in the special circumstances could not reasonably object if he took a slight snort. He raised his eyes to heaven, as though to ask her if a couple of quick ones might not be permitted; and he fancied that a faint, far-off voice whispered "Go to it!"

And at this moment he found himself standing outside a brightly-lighted saloon.

For an instant he hesitated. Then, as a twinge of anguish in the region of his broken heart reminded him of the necessity for immediate remedies, he pushed open the swing doors and went in.

THE principal feature of the cheerful, brightly-lit room in which he found himself was a long counter, at which were standing a number of the citizenry, each with an elbow on the woodwork and a foot upon the neat brass rail which ran below. Behind the counter appeared the upper section of one of the most benevolent and kindly-looking men that William had ever seen. He had a large, smooth face, and he wore a white coat, and he eyed William, as he advanced, with a sort of reverent joy.

"Is this Mike's Place?" asked William.

"Yes, sir," replied the white-coated man.

"Are you Mike?"

"No, sir. But I am his representative, and have full authority to act on his behalf. What can I have the pleasure of doing for you?"'

The man's whole attitude made him seem so like a large-hearted elder brother that William felt no diffidence about confiding in him. He placed an elbow on the counter and a foot on the rail, and spoke with a sob in his voice.

"Suppose the only girl you had ever loved had gone and got engaged to another, what in your view would best meet the case?"

The gentlemanly bar-tender pondered for some moments.

"Well," he replied at length, "I advance it, you understand, as a purely personal opinion, and I shall not be in the least offended if you decide not to act upon it: but my suggestion—for what it is worth—is that you try a Dynamite Dew-Drop."

One of the crowd that had gathered sympathetically round shook his head. He was a charming man with a black eye, who had shaved on the preceding Thursday.

"Much better give him a Dreamland Special."

A second man, in a sweater and a cloth cap, had yet another theory.

"You can't beat an Undertaker's Joy."

They were all so perfectly delightful and appeared to have his interests so unselfishly at heart that William could not bring himself to choose between them. He solved the problem in diplomatic fashion by playing no favourites and ordering all three of the beverages recommended.

The effect was instantaneous and gratifying. As he drained the first glass, it seemed to him that a torchlight procession, of whose existence he had hitherto not been aware, had begun to march down his throat and explore the recesses of his stomach. The second glass, though slightly too heavily charged with molten lava, was extremely palatable. It helped the torchlight procession along by adding to it a brass band of singular power and sweetness of tone. And with the third somebody began to touch off fireworks inside his head.

William felt better—not only spiritually but physically. He seemed to himself to be a bigger, finer man, and the loss of Myrtle Banks had somehow in a flash lost nearly all its importance. After all, as he said to the man with the black eye, Myrtle Banks wasn't everybody.

"Now what do you recommend?" he asked the bar-tender, having turned the last glass upside down.

The bar-tender mused again, one forefinger thoughtfully pressed against the side of his face.

"Well, I'll tell you," he said. "When my brother Elmer lost his girl, he drank straight rye. Yes, sir. That's what he drank—straight rye. 'I've lost my girl,' he said, 'and I'm going to drink straight rye.' That's what he said. Yes, sir. Straight rye."

"And was your brother Elmer," asked William, anxiously, "a man whose example in your opinion should be followed? Was he a man you could trust?"

"He owned the biggest duck-farm in the southern half of Illinois."

"That settles it," said William. "What was good enough for a duck who owned half Illinois is good enough for me. Oblige me by asking these gentlemen what they will have, and start pouring."

The bar-tender obeyed, and William, having tried a pint or two of the strange liquid just to see if he liked it, found that he did, and ordered some. He then began to move about among his new friends, patting one on the shoulder, slapping another affably on the back, and asking a third what his Christian name was.

"I want you all," he said, climbing on to the counter so that his voice should carry better, "to come and stay with me in England. Never in my life have I met men whose faces I liked so much. More like

brothers than anything is the way I regard you. So just you pack up a few things and come along and put up at my little place for as long as you can manage. You particularly, my dear old chap," he added, beaming at the man in the sweater.

" Thanks," said the man with the sweater.

" What did you say ? " said William.

" I said, ' Thanks.' "

William slowly removed his coat and rolled up his shirt-sleeves.

" I call you gentlemen to witness," he said, quietly, " that I have been grossly insulted by this gentleman who has just grossly insulted me. I am not a quarrelsome man, but if anybody wants a row they can have it. And when it comes to being cursed and sworn at by an ugly bounder in a sweater and a cloth cap, it is time to take steps."

And with these spirited words William Mulliner sprang from the counter, grasped the other by the throat, and bit him sharply on the right ear. There was a confused interval, during which somebody attached himself to the collar of William's waistcoat and the seat of William's trousers, and then a sense of swift movement and rush of cool air.

William discovered that he was seated on the pavement outside the saloon. A hand emerged from the swing door and threw his hat out. And he was alone with the night and his meditations.

These were, as you may suppose, of a singularly bitter nature. Sorrow and disillusionment racked William Mulliner like a physical pain. That his friends inside there, in spite of the fact that he had been all sweetness and light and had not done a thing to them, should have thrown him out into the hard street was the saddest thing he had ever heard of ; and for some minutes he sat there, weeping silently.

Presently he heaved himself to his feet : and, placing one foot with infinite delicacy in front of the other, and then drawing the other one up and placing it with infinite delicacy in front of that, he began to walk back to his hotel.

At the corner he paused. There were some railings on his right. He clung to them and rested awhile.

The railings to which William Mulliner had attached himself belonged to a brownstone house of the kind that seems destined from the first moment of its building to receive guests, both resident and transient, at a moderate weekly rental. It was, in fact, as he would have discovered had he been clear-sighted enough to read the card over the door, Mrs. Beulah O'Brien's Theatrical Boarding-House (" A Home From Home—No Cheques Cashed—This Means You ").

But William was not in the best of shape for reading cards. A sort of mist had obscured the world, and he was finding it difficult to keep his eyes open. And presently, his chin wedged into the railings, he fell into a dreamless sleep.

HE was awakened by light flashing in his eyes ; and, opening them, saw that a window opposite where he was standing had become brightly illuminated. His slumbers had cleared his vision ; and he was able to observe that the room into which he was looking was a dining-room. The long table was set for the evening meal ; and to William, as he gazed, the sight of that cosy apartment, with the gaslight falling on the knives and forks and spoons, seemed the most pathetic and poignant that he had ever beheld.

A mood of the most extreme sentimentality now had him in its grip. The thought that he would never own a little home like that racked him from stem to stern with an almost unbearable torment. What, argued William, clinging to the railings and crying weakly, could compare, when you came right down to it, with a little home ? A man with a little home is all right, whereas a man without a little home is just a bit of flotsam on the ocean of life. If Myrtle Banks had only consented to marry him, he would have had a little home. But she had refused to marry him, so he would never have a little home. What Myrtle Banks wanted, felt William, was a good swift clout on the side of the head.

The thought pleased him. He was feeling physically perfect again now, and seemed to have shaken off completely the slight indisposition from which he had been suffering. His legs had lost their tendency to act independently of the rest of his body. His head felt clearer, and he had a sense of overwhelming strength. If ever, in short, there was a moment when he could administer that clout on the side of the head to Myrtle Banks as it should be administered, that moment was now.

He was on the point of moving off to find her and teach her what it meant to stop a man like himself from having a little home, when someone entered the room into which he was looking, and he paused to make further inspection.

The new arrival was a coloured maid-servant. She staggered to the head of the table beneath the weight of a large tureen containing, so William suspected, hash. A moment later a stout woman with bright golden hair came in and sat down opposite the tureen.

The instinct to watch other people eat is one of the most deeply implanted in the

human bosom, and William lingered, intent. There was, he told himself, no need to hurry. He knew which was Myrtle's room in the hotel. It was just across the corridor from his own. He could pop in any time during the night and give her that clout. Meanwhile, he wanted to watch these people eat hash.

And then the door opened again, and there filed into the room a little procession. And William, clutching the railings, watched it with bulging eyes.

The procession was headed by an elderly man in a check suit with a carnation in his buttonhole. He was about three feet six in height, though the military jauntiness with which he carried himself made him seem fully three feet seven. He was followed by a younger man who wore spectacles and whose height was perhaps

A hand emerged from the swing door and threw his hat out.

three feet four. And behind these two came, in single file, six others, scaling down by degrees until, bringing up the rear of the procession, there entered a rather stout man in tweeds and bedroom slippers who could not have measured more than two feet eight.

They took their places at the table. Hash was distributed to all. And the man in tweeds, having inspected his plate with obvious relish, removed his slippers and, picking up knife and fork with his toes, fell to with a keen appetite.

William Mulliner uttered a soft moan, and tottered away.

It was a black moment for my Uncle William. Only an instant before he had

been congratulating himself on having shaken off the effects of his first indulgence in alcohol after an abstinence of twenty-nine years; but now he perceived that he was still intoxicated.

Intoxicated? The word did not express it by a mile. He was oiled, boiled, fried, plastered, whiffled, sozzled, and blotto. Only by the exercise of the most consummate caution and address could he hope to get back to his hotel and reach his bedroom without causing an open scandal.

Of course, if his walk that night had taken him a few yards farther down the street than the door of Mike's Place, he would have seen that there was a very simple explanation of the spectacle which he had just witnessed. A walk so extended would have brought him to the San Francisco Palace of Varieties, outside which large posters proclaimed the exclusive engagement for two weeks of

MURPHY'S MIDGETS.
BIGGER AND BETTER THAN EVER.

But of the existence of these posters he was not aware; and it is not too much to say that the iron entered into William Mulliner's soul.

That his legs should have become temporarily unscrewed at the joints was a phenomenon which he had been able to bear with fortitude. That his head should be feeling as if a good many bees had decided to use it as a hive was unpleasant, but not unbearably so. But that his brain should have gone off its castors and be causing him to see visions was the end of all things.

William had always prided himself on the keenness of his mental powers. All through the long voyage on the ship, when Desmond Franklyn had related anecdotes illustrative of his prowess as a man of action, William Mulliner had always consoled himself by feeling that in the matter of brain he could give Franklyn three bisques and a beating any time he chose to start. And now, it seemed, he had lost even this advantage over his rival. For Franklyn, dull-witted clod though he might be, was not such an absolute minus quantity that he would imagine he had seen a man of two feet eight cutting up hash with his toes. That hideous depth of mental decay had been reserved for William Mulliner.

Moodily he made his way back to his hotel. In a corner of the Palm Room he saw Myrtle Banks deep in conversation with Franklyn, but all desire to give her a clout on the side of the head had now left him. With his chin sunk on his breast, he entered the elevator and was carried up to his room.

Here, as rapidly as his quivering fingers would permit, he undressed; and, climbing into the bed as it came round for the second time, lay for a space with wide-open eyes. He had been too shaken to switch his light off, and the rays of the lamp shone on the handsome ceiling which undulated above him. He gave himself up to thought once more.

No doubt, he felt, thinking it over now, his mother had had some very urgent reason for withholding him from alcoholic drink. She must have known of some family secret, sedulously guarded from his infant ears—some dark tale of a fatal Mulliner taint. "William must never learn of this!" she had probably said when they told her the old legend of how every Mulliner for centuries back had died a maniac, victim at last to the fatal fluid. And to-night, despite her gentle care, he had found out for himself.

He saw now that this derangement of his eyesight was only the first step in the gradual dissolution which was the Mulliner Curse. Soon his sense of hearing would go, then his sense of touch.

He sat up in bed. It seemed to him that, as he gazed at the ceiling, a considerable section of it had parted from the parent body and fallen with a crash to the floor.

WILLIAM MULLINER stared dumbly. He knew, of course, that it was an illusion. But what a perfect illusion! If he had not had the special knowledge which he possessed, he would have stated without fear of contradiction that there was a gap six feet wide above him and a mass of dust and plaster on the carpet below.

And even as his eyes deceived him, so did his ears. He seemed to be conscious of a babel of screams and shouts. The corridor, he could have sworn, was full of flying feet. The world appeared to be all bangs and crashes and thuds. A cold fear gripped at William's heart. His sense of hearing was playing tricks with him already.

His whole being recoiled from making the final experiment, but he forced himself out of bed. He reached a finger towards the nearest heap of plaster and drew it back with a groan. Yes, it was as he feared, his sense of touch had gone wrong too. That heap of plaster, though purely a figment of his disordered brain, had felt solid.

So there it was. One little moderately festive evening at Mike's Place, and the Curse of the Mulliners had got him. Within an hour of absorbing the first drink of his life, it had deprived him of his sight, his hearing, and his sense of touch. Quick service, felt William Mulliner.

Climbing into the bed as it came round for the second time——

As he climbed back into bed, it appeared to him that two of the walls fell out. He shut his eyes, and presently sleep, which has been well called Tired Nature's Sweet Restorer, brought oblivion. His last waking thought was that he imagined he had heard another wall go.

WILLIAM MULLINER was a sound sleeper, and it was many hours before consciousness returned to him. When he awoke, he looked about him in astonishment. The haunting horror of the night had passed; and now, though conscious of a rather severe headache, he knew that he was seeing things as they were.

And yet it seemed odd to think that what he beheld was not the remains of some nightmare. Not only was the world slightly yellow and a bit blurred about the edges, but it had changed in its very essentials overnight. Where eight hours before there had been a wall, only an open space appeared, with bright sunlight streaming through it. The ceiling was on the floor, and almost the only thing remaining of what had been an expensive bedroom in a first-class hotel was the bed. Very strange, he thought, and very irregular.

A voice broke in upon his meditations.

"Why, Mr. Mulliner!"

William turned, and being, like all the Mulliners, the soul of modesty, dived abruptly beneath the bed-clothes. For the voice was the voice of Myrtle Banks. And she was in his room!

"Mr. Mulliner!"

William poked his head out cautiously. And then he perceived that the proprieties had not been outraged as he had imagined. Miss Banks was not in his room, but in the corridor. The intervening wall had disappeared. Shaken, but relieved, he sat up in bed, the sheet drawn round his shoulders.

"You don't mean to say you're still in bed?" gasped the girl.

"Why, is it awfully late?" said William.

"Did you actually stay up here all through it?"

"Through what?"

"The earthquake."

"What earthquake?"

"The earthquake last night."

"Oh, that earthquake?" said William, carelessly. "I did notice some sort of an earthquake. I remember seeing the ceiling come down and saying to myself, 'I shouldn't wonder if that wasn't an earthquake.'

" You don't mean to say you're still in bed ? " gasped the girl.

And then the walls fell out, and I said, ' Yes, I believe it *is* an earthquake.' And then I turned over and went to sleep."

Myrtle Banks was staring at him with eyes that reminded him partly of twin stars and partly of a snail's.

" You must be the bravest man in the world ! "

William gave a curt laugh.

" Oh, well," he said, " I may not spend my whole life persecuting unfortunate sharks with pocket-knives, but I find I generally manage to keep my head fairly well in a crisis. We Mulliners are like that. We do not say much, but we have the right stuff in us."

He clutched his head. A sharp spasm had reminded him how much of the right stuff he had in him at that moment.

" My hero ! " breathed the girl, almost inaudibly.

" And how is your *fiancé* this bright, sunny morning ? " asked William, nonchalantly. It was torture to refer to the man, but he must show her that a Mulliner knew how to take his medicine.

She gave a little shudder.

" I have no *fiancé*," she said.

" But I thought you told me you and Franklyn——"

" I am no longer engaged to Mr. Franklyn. Last night, when the earthquake started, I cried to him to help me ; and he, with a hasty ' Some other time ! ' over his shoulder, disappeared into the open like something shot out of a gun. I never saw a man run so fast. This morning I broke off the engagement." She uttered a scornful laugh. " Sharks and pocket-knives ! I don't believe he ever killed a shark in his life."

" And even if he did," said William, " what

of it? I mean to say, how infrequently in married life must the necessity for killing sharks with pocket-knives arise! What a husband needs is not some purely adventitious gift like that—a parlour trick, you might almost call it—but a steady character, a warm and generous disposition, and a loving heart."

"How true!" she murmured, dreamily.

"Myrtle," said William, "I would be a husband like that. The steady character, the warm and generous disposition, and the loving heart to which I have alluded are at your disposal. Will you accept them?"

"I will," said Myrtle Banks.

AND that (concluded Mr. Mulliner) is the story of my Uncle William's romance. And you will readily understand, having heard it, how his eldest son, my cousin, J. S. F. E. Mulliner, got his name.

"J. S. F. E.?" I said.

"John San Francisco Earthquake Mulliner," explained my friend.

"There never was a San Francisco earthquake," said the Californian. "Only a fire."

(Next month: "Those in Peril on the Tee.")

A BOWL OF CONTENTION

(Being a narrative related by that most puissant nobleman and connoisseur, Lord Louis Lewis.)

by

ROLAND PERTWEE

Illustrated by
M. MACKINLAY

"FOR my own part," said Lord Louis Lewis, dropping the peeled quarters of a walnut into his glass of port, "I am reluctant to support the general opinion that dealers in art and vertu are of necessity rogues There is too much roguery in other trades and professions to admit of invidious comparisons. But while as a class they may not be dishonest, dealers share in common with private collectors a revengefulness of spirit toward any person or persons who has or have got the better of them in a business transaction that is greatly to be deplored. They neither forget nor forgive an injury which in any way reflects discredit upon their professional acumen."

"You will have a cigar?" said Mr. Russell Yorke, but Lord Louis shook his head.

"Thank you, not yet, for to my mind nicotine and the juice of the grape are as ill assorted as an Adam's elbow chair at a Queen Anne escritoire."

Mr. Yorke sighed.

"Nowadays these refinements of taste and palate are all too rare," he murmured, closing the box. "But that I feared to interrupt the course of the story which I trust you are about to tell, I should have delayed the offer until a more suitable moment."

Lord Louis smiled.

"It is curious you should have referred to refinements of taste," said he, "for the narrative I have in mind largely hinges upon something of the sort—upon the oddity, my dear Russell Yorke, of finding in a house, peculiar for containing paintings, ceramics, and sculpture of the finest quality, a single example of absolute rubbish."

"You don't say so," said his hearer, much shocked.

"I say it emphatically. That fact was responsible for a long and formidable vendetta in the art world."

Eager to avoid interruption, Mr. Russell Yorke commanded his butler to refrain from clearing the table until he rang the bell.

"And place the decanter at his Lordship's elbow," he concluded.

"A charming piece of Waterford," said Lord Louis, caressing the cut-glass facets with a sensitive third finger. "Even the ruddiness of this excellent wine cannot conceal that unmistakable bluish tone."

"Nothing escapes you," said his host in admiration, "but you were about to tell me——"

"To be sure. Of a dealer's revenge. You can hardly fail to have heard the name of Anton Navagues."

"Of King Street, St. James's?"

"The same. By birth a French-Canadian, he was educated in Hamburg. He speaks English with a Palestinic accent, French with an American accent, and has the outward appearance of a Spanish grandee. His Vandyck beard, his eyes of Vandyck brown, his glittering smile and tall, tubular figure wrapped in that now rare garment,

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the frock-coat, contribute to the furnishing of an arresting personality."

"Correct me if I am wrong, Lord Louis, but surely he always wears a silk hat?"

Lord Louis inclined his head.

"An article of apparel known in America as a two-gallon lid."

"How very shocking are these abuses of our language!" said Mr. Russell Yorke. "But pray proceed."

"I was about to do so. Anton Navagues lives in one of those immense houses overlooking Hyde Park on the north side—a house stuffed—I use the word advisedly—with valuable and exquisite examples of art. There is assembled within those four walls such abundance of vertu that the eye is positively tortured by it."

Mr. Russell Yorke shook his head sadly.

"Overabundance is most distressing," said he. "The essence of decoration lies in pattern and void. How well the early Chinese enamellers realized that!"

Lord Louis nodded.

"You, my dear Russell Yorke," said he, "have spilt a bib full."

Few things afforded Lord Louis greater entertainment than startling the academic susceptibilities of his friend by the usage of rare and unexpected idioms.

"In other words," he added, "how true! But, although possessed of a keen eye and a sure sense of art values, Anton Navagues is a man totally devoid of all refinement."

"How very odd!"

"Not at all—for, although his calling, his methods, his manner of speech, and possibly even his name might predispose one to the belief that he is a Jew, Anton Navagues is of the Christian faith."

"Do you then suggest that the best artists are Jews, Lord Louis?"

"I do not. But I say without fear of contradiction that the finest appreciators of art are Jews, and that none realizes better than a Jew how best to dispose, or dispose of, his possessions. In Navagues this ability was absent. He lumped everything together hugger-mugger."

He raised his glass.

"Your very good health."

"Yours, Lord Louis."

The toasts were offered and accepted with a bow.

"I will now introduce you to Navagues' protagonist in this affair, a gentleman equally well known among the fraternity of St. James's and the sale-room—one Daniel Valder, although I suspect at baptism he was provided with a name bearing a more Oriental, or Levantine, flavour."

"Pray describe him."

"Napoleonic, my dear Russell Yorke. A remarkable man—smooth as an egg, wily as a snake, and clever—very clever, my dear Yorke. When I tell you that he arrived in this country forty years ago from the Mediterranean with silk Oriental rugs, made in England, for sale, and from that humble origin is now possessed of the finest showrooms in Duke Street, and an overwhelming mansion in Park Lane, you will appreciate he must be no ordinary individual."

"Indeed. You will allow me to refill your glass?"

"No more, please. Valder is obsessed with a passion for rarity. To lunch with him at Park Lane is to make acquaintance with various kinds of food and liquor with which even the most enlightened are unfamiliar. It was at his table I made my first, and I trust my last, acquaintance with bird's-nest soup and palm wine."

Mr. Russell Yorke shook his head.

"The craze for the rare and obscure should never be allowed to invade or assail the inner man," said he. "In my opinion beef or mutton, varied with a little game and washed down with a reliable wine, is a form of dietetics very hard to improve upon."

"I have seldom enjoyed a better dinner than you have given me to-night," said Lord Louis.

"Nor I more agreeable company," said his host, rounding off the parenthesis with characteristic grace.

"BUT to continue," said Lord Louis, popping one of the wine-soaked nut quarters into his mouth and masticating it with choice appreciation. "In the course of their careers as art dealers Navagues and Valder were constantly in competition and conflict over the possession of this, that, or the other. Both insisted upon buying outside the ring and refusing to take part in the dishonourable practice of a knock-out, which, as you know, follows a sale. As a result they were everlastingly bidding against each other and spoiling each other's market. And, as a further result, they were most unpopular among their brother dealers. It was through this unpopularity their friendship for one another came into being.

"Their first meeting, in the amiable sense, as apart from the antagonistic, took place in a completely empty apartment where there was not the slightest danger of either one offering to the other any hospitality whatsoever. There was not even a chair to sit upon."

"Remarkable, very remarkable," said Russell Yorke.

"In this bare apartment, bereft of social amenities, the two faced one another and discussed, with that brevity peculiar to

successful business men, the possibility of combining forces. Throughout the interview Valder never smiled and Navagues never ceased to smile.

"At the end of ten minutes Valder produced a double-cased Georgian watch, finely studded with emeralds, and examined the dial with grave preoccupation. He held it in such a manner that its beauties were apparent. He knew that Navagues was a keen student of horology, and although the business in hand was of major importance, he saw no reason why a tributary transaction should not take place at the same time.

"Bending forward to examine the watch, Navagues intentionally allowed a whiff of smoke from his cigar to assail the delicate nostrils of his associate.

"Valder sniffed.

"'Good, but queer,' said he. 'Where do you get those?'

"'I get dese vrom'—he gave an address—'but he iss keeping der consignment for me. How much for der vatch?'

"Valder sold the watch, and on the way back to Bayswater Navagues rang up his cigar merchant on a matter of commission. Several meetings of a similar kind took place before these giants decided to form a partnership. Both were cautious to a fault and revealed the natural reluctance of the solitary operator to merge his identity in that of another man. However, it was eventually agreed to co-operate, and deeds to that effect were copiously prepared by firms of rival lawyers. It was arranged that the signing of the deeds, to be followed by a luncheon, should take place at Navagues' house, and further arranged from that time onward that they should address one another by their Christian names, or any abbreviation of Christian names familiarity might inspire."

LORD LOUIS finished his port, pushed back his chair, and crackled a cigar to an attentive ear.

"Of that luncheon party, my dear Russell Yorke, I know little or nothing. The servants were sent from the room and the two gentlemen conversed over their wine in doubtless very much the same fashion as we are conversing now."

"Quite," said Mr. Russell Yorke.

"I heard, however, that Dan, as I now propose, with your permission, to call him, was greatly shocked at the overcrowding of his host's abode. He declared that in such a pickle nothing looked like anything and everything might be muck."

"I always think," said Mr. Russell Yorke, "that muck is a vivid but brutal word."

"It was employed in the brutal sense."

"Just so."

"Navagues' craving for plenteousness was not confined to decoration, but o'erspread the fare placed before his guest. It came to pass, therefore, despite the elegances of his palate, that Dan was over-fed and over-wined before his host allowed him to depart. I have been told by a footman who was on duty in the entrance hall and has since entered my service that the manner in which he collected his hat from the rack suggested the influence of alcohol. On his way to the front door Dan pulled up short and turned the searchlight of his eyes upon a large bowl, in *Famille Noire*, which stood alone upon a console table as a receptacle for visiting cards. Handing his cane to the footman, he picked up the bowl, held it to his cheek for a moment, and set it down with the one word, 'Nice.' He was repeating the word 'nice' when the footman gave him the air."

"Gave him what, Lord Louis?"

"The air, my dear Yorke. It is an expression meaning showed him out. In the circumstances you will agree that the phrase is not unhappy, for there was nothing the footman could have done for Dan the more surely to his advantage."

"The fumes of drink—just so—quite."

"The distance between the house facing Hyde Park and the mansion in Park Lane was not great. Dan decided to walk, not because he liked the exercise or thought it was good for him, but because few things afforded him a greater satisfaction than doing a taxi-driver out of a fare. He walked beneath the plane trees, one hand behind his back and three fingers of the other tucked into his waistcoat, after the fashion of the First Consul, whose features, as I have already mentioned, his own so greatly resembled. As he walked he turned over many things in his busy mind. For example, he queried how in a fifty-fifty partnership matters could be arranged whereby the share of the profits would be to his own advantage. This he realized was a necessary precaution, as undoubtedly Navagues would lose no time in making similar dispositions."

"Come, come," said Mr. Russell Yorke, with a deprecating laugh, "how can you know the thoughts that were passing through his mind?"

"I do not pretend to know what was passing through his mind, but, as a student of human nature, I can speak with authority of the thoughts that permanently abode in his mind."

Mr. Yorke hastened to apologize for his interruption and besought his friend to proceed.

"Having taken affairs in the order of their importance, as was his custom, Daniel

On his way to the front door Dan turned the searchlight of his eyes upon a large bowl.

Valder bent his consideration to the matter of the porcelain bowl. A few days before he had acquired a curiously delicate pole-stand with cabriole legs and a finely-reeded stem. Nothing would satisfy him but to see the *Famille Noire* bowl reposing upon so graceful a plinth. In the ordinary course of events Daniel strenuously avoided deals between friends or partners, but in the present instance his craving for the bowl was so great that he determined, albeit unwisely, to become possessed of it. It may be that the alcohol consumed at lunch was in a measure responsible for this dangerous and unwonted decision. No sooner had he entered his own house than he sat down at his table and scribbled a note to Navagues, which, accompanied by a

cheque, he put in an envelope and gave to a messenger with instructions to await an answer.

"In due course the messenger presented himself to Navagues, who smilingly broke the seal and read, first a cheque for three hundred pounds, and then the note, which ran :—

"'DEAR ANTON,

'*A good lunch calls for something by way of a souvenir. I like the bowl in the hall—the black bowl. If you will accept three hundred pounds, please cash enclosed cheque and give the bowl to messenger.*

'*Yours,*

'DAN.'

"Tapping his teeth with a gold pencil-case, Navagues read the note twice. Then he rang for the butler and said :—

"'Pack der black bowl what iss in der hall, and give it to der messenger. Den send to me my secretary.'

"To his secretary he said :

"'Take down. "Dear Dan,—It is yours." Got dat? Goot. Type it at once and give it to der messenger. Den put on your hat and cash dis cheque at Mister Valder's bank before dey closes. Queek now.'

"His orders were obeyed, and through his study window Anton watched the messenger depart with the bowl beneath his arm. To himself he murmured :—

"'When I tink dat I buy dis bowl at de Oriental bazaar of Margate for a dollar, I must laugh at what iss habbened.'"

Delighted by his friend's admirable mimicry, Mr. Russell Yorke declared he would have made his fortune upon the stage. Lord Louis waved aside this flattering interruption.

"By the following morning's post," said he, "Anton received a second letter couched in somewhat different terms. It struck him that Dan was clinging desperately to an amiable note, in spite of inclinations of a more elemental kind :—

"'——*examination in a better light with, perhaps, a clearer eye showed what, of course, you knew all along—the bowl is an indifferent fake. I do not blame you for having a joke at my expense, but it was the liberality of your own entertainment that made the joke possible. On receipt of my cheque I will dispatch the bowl to your house. Telephone sharp to acknowledge this.*'

"ANTON NAVAGUES read the letter with relish, and, pushing back his chair from the breakfast table, beamed upon a diaphanously-clad female figure who, in her flippant flight across the ceiling, had apparently succeeded in overcoming the laws of gravity."

"Very drolly put," Mr. Russell Yorke murmured. "Flippant and gravity is excellent. How few people nowadays appreciate the elegancies of a well-turned phrase!"

"Quite," said Lord Louis, "but, as I was saying, picking up a telephone which stood on a table by the window, he put through a call to Valder's house to say that, the cheque having been cashed, it was too late for readjustments."

"But the partnership!" exclaimed Russell Yorke. "This was surely a disastrous policy?"

"You will see—you will see," said Lord Louis, holding up a finger. "A moment later the telephone bell rang, but with his same sphinx-like smile Anton ignored its appeal. Within a quarter of an hour Daniel Valder, the bowl under his arm, was shown into the study where Anton sat at his table drumming tenuous fingers upon the polished surface.

"'What's the idea?' Dan demanded. 'What's the idea, Anton? A joke's a joke. Where's my cheque?'

"'Cashed,' was the laconic reply; 'but what for you bring der bowl 'ere? Wos you so fond of him to carry him always aboud?'

"'It's a fake.'

"''Sno more a fake than he wos yesterday.'

"'You sold me a fake.'

"'I don't sell—you buy. 'S very different.'

"'I want my cheque. Right now.'

"Anton Navagues snapped his fingers.

"'What you tink of me if I say ver' well? I do not tell you he's a good bowl, don't it? I say notting to his favour. I know he's a ver' bad bowl. You offer your own price. You send your own cheque. I tink you mus' 'ave some motives. I tink as you wrote of your letter 'tis a souvenir you want of dis pleasant lunch and are willing to pay for him.'

"Daniel Valder's mighty head swung this way and that.

"'With the garlic your cook puts into everything a man wants no other souvenir.' Then his voice hardened away from satire. 'But if you think I'll pay three hundred sovereigns for a bit of modern Oriental trash you must be mad.'

"'You have paid it already, Daniel.'

"'I am here to get it back.'

"The lids drooped over Anton's eyes of Vandyck brown. His sensitive fingers caressed the Vandyck beard.

"'Leesten,' said he. 'If dis bowl iss all right, which he's not all right, he iss wort' eight hunded pound under der hammer.

Daniel Valder, the bowl under his arm, was shown into the study. "What's the idea?" he demanded. "It's a fake."

Derefore you try to diddle me of five hunded, hein? Surely 'sbetter you give me dree hunded pound dan diddle me of five?'

"'You could have named your own price,' said Daniel. 'You could have asked eight hundred if you wanted eight hundred.'

"'Orh! Look 'ere—look! You want me to ask eight hunded for somping dat's not wort' eight shilling. Some pusiness, yes, but to cheat like dat! Oo! Oi, oi!'

"'Anton Navagues,' said Daniel, 'you're a damn scoundrel. If you weren't a damn scoundrel you'd have told me the bowl was a fake.'

"Anton leaned back and put his fingertips together.

"'Iss dis to be my work for der future? Dat I mus' run after my pardner to correct his mistakes?'

"Daniel crashed his fist on the table.

"'The only mistake I ever made,' said he, 'was joining forces with you.'

" ' Dat is somping easy to be cured,' Anton replied, and taking the deeds of partnership from a table drawer he tore them across and tossed the halves into the grate. He added, ' When I have your letter yesterday and see what a kind of man you are I know den we can make no pusiness togeder.'

" For a space the two men measured each other with unflinching gaze. At the end Daniel Valder said :—

" ' You fool. You poor fool. I am sorry for you, Navagues. Sorry. The reason I do not throw you on to the railings is because I mean you to live long enough to learn what a fool you are.'

" To which Anton replied with his unchanging smile :—

" ' I have only to say for answer to dis dat de older I am der wiser.'

" ' Wait. Just wait, that's all.'

" And picking up the bowl Dan walked out."

MR. RUSSELL YORKE shook his head.

" Navagues would seem to have made a dangerous enemy."

Lord Louis smiled.

" In that profession every rival dealer is a dangerous enemy. On which account Navagues was in no sense disturbed by the threat. He knew that Valder could do no more than bid against him in the sale-room, but he knew, also, that this bidding was in no danger of overrunning common prudence, as to pay too long a price for a revenge wreaked upon an adversary is to be hoist on one's own petard. He was, moreover, fortified by the knowledge that from their recent encounter he had emerged victorious."

" But as they had formed a partnership——"

" My dear Yorke. The partnership was formed on the assumption of mutual infallibility. In proving himself guilty of error Daniel Valder in Navagues' opinion had become worthless."

" I see. A very exacting opinion."

" It is an exacting profession. For weeks after the event Navagues gave it wide publicity and declared, in effect, that what Valder knew of ceramics you could stick in your eye and still have room for an elephant's tusk."

" Good gracious me ! " Mr. Yorke exclaimed, flinching. " Did he so ? "

" Naturally opinions of that kind did not encourage Valder to foster a spirit of forgiveness or forgetfulness. He became more silent than hitherto—more broody and more morose. He spent long hours in the porch of his mansion in Park Lane, his hands behind his back, his chin tucked into his chest, looking more than ever like Napoleon in the final stages of his career. An eminent caricaturist published a drawing of him standing in this position upon an inverted bowl surrounded by a sea of mocking faces. As a caption to the drawing were the words, ' How far is St. Helena from a bowl of *Famille Noire ?* ' "

" Mordant," said Mr. Russell Yorke. " Very mordant."

" Navagues purchased the original drawing and hung it on a wall at the foot of his bed, where, owing to lack of space, it superimposed a corner of a choice little nude by Ingres, which, until then, had been the first object of interest to engage Navagues' attention on waking."

" In my opinion," said Russell Yorke, closing his eyes, " nudes are out of place in a bedroom."

" It is a matter of taste."

Mr. Yorke nodded

" Just so. But please continue."

" The sequel, if I may so name it, came about after an interval of five years. It was contained in an envelope addressed in type to Navagues. It consisted of a paragraph cut from an American newspaper which read :—

" ' At Hardmuther's sale-room on Fifth Avenue a bowl of *Famille Noire*, the property of Mr. Daniel Valder, the English art dealer and connoisseur, was sold under the hammer to Earle Leibner, the millionaire, for four thousand dollars.' "

Mr. Russell Yorke was thunderstruck.

" Four thousand dollars is eight hundred pounds," he cried. " Is it possible Navagues was mistaken, and the bowl was genuine ? "

" It was precisely that fear that reduced Navagues to the verge of collapse. On the face of it there seemed to be no other explanation, for although among dealers, as he was well aware, Valder would not shrink from attempting to palm off a fake, yet his reputation with the general public for selling only what was absolutely authentic was too high to allow him to take such a risk. Navagues presumed that by fair means or foul the tables had been turned and the joke was against himself. For the first time his professional prestige was at stake, and he stood revealed as a man who had sold something for five hundred pounds less than its market value. Moreover, he had been guilty of losing for a partner a man who clearly was possessed of a better intellectual equipment than his own. Tearing the caricature of Dan from the wall, he dashed it to the ground, and the Ingres' nude came into its own again. Also he cried :—

" ' Oi, oi, oi ! ' and beat his forehead with his fists.

" From that moment Navagues came to a dual resolve: one—to recover the bowl ; two —to reform the fractured partnership between himself and Valder."

" You have not yet told me whether the bowl was genuine," said Russell Yorke.

" It was not. Its value was precisely what Anton paid for it at the Oriental bazaar."

" Then rather than admit defeat Valder sacrificed his reputation for honest dealing ? "

Lord Louis shook his head.

" No, no. Valder was too astute to do that, as presently I hope to prove. It so happened in the climax of the story I was privileged to be a witness. As sundry modifications and additions to my usual habits of speech may have suggested, I have recently returned from the United States. Of late I have been crossing the Atlantic with some regularity, since New York and Philadelphia are practically the only remaining cities where the finest examples of English period furniture are still to be obtained."

Mr. Russell Yorke clicked his tongue.

" Tch ! tch ! tch ! "

" Among many agreeable recollections of hospitality was a visit to the house of Mr. Earle Leibner, who bought the bowl from Dan.

" I had read of the purchase, and as a lover of Chinese porcelain I was anxious to handle the bowl myself. This privilege Leibner, a most engaging man, generously accorded me. I need hardly tell you, my dear Yorke, that before taking it in my hands I realized that the bowl was valueless. But since I hold it to be no part of a guest's duties to underrate his host's possessions, I forbore from making any remark. However, silence could not conceal my surprise, and Leibner, undoubtedly, was accustomed to read unspoken thoughts. Point-blank he charged me with disliking the bowl ; which, feeling my reputation as an expert was at stake, I did not deny. With the greatest frankness he then said :—

" ' I hate it myself, and as I can trust you to let the matter go no further, I'll say it's a bit of impure trash.'

" ' In that case,' said I, ' why do you not sue Valder for a return of the purchase money ? '

" For answer he smiled cryptically and directed my attention to as pretty an early Gainsborough as a man might wish to see.

" ' Lord Louis,' said he, ' I'll have you price that canvas.'

" If there is one thing upon which I feel myself qualified to speak with authority it is upon the value of the works of eighteenth-century masters. I replied that at Christie's any day in the week the picture would realize fourteen hundred pounds, or a shade more.

" ' Just so, Lord Louis. Then would it surprise you to learn that I paid Daniel Valder four hundred English pounds for that little masterpiece ? '

" It did surprise me very much, and I said so, adding :—

" ' You may flatter yourself you acquired it for a thousand less than its market value.'

" Again Earle Leibner smiled.

" ' You are not in the trade,' said he, ' so I'm going to let you into a secret. Daniel Valder consented to let me have the Gainsborough at that figure providing I would bid up to eight hundred for the bowl.'

" ' But wait a bit,' said I. ' In offering the bowl as genuine at a public auction Valder was jeopardizing his reputation.'

" ' Who mentioned genuine ? ' was the answer. ' The sale catalogue read : *Famille Noire* (Style) — in brackets — Bowl — from the collection of Daniel Valder. When it came on the table it was laughed at— that is, they laughed until I dropped the flag and started the bidding. Then one or two folks got the dizzy-doubts and rumbled her along to the two thousand five hundred dollar mark, from which a pal of Valder's and myself rode her up to the post.'

" ' This is all very bewildering,' said I.

" ' Sure it is,' said he, ' but by obliging the old boy that way and giving the newspapers something to write about I got my Gainsborough cheap.'

" The ways of dealers are strange and obscure, but I could not resist expressing my surprise that he gave such prominence to a piece of rubbish in a collection otherwise very choice.

" ' In the contract I made with Valder,' he replied, ' is a clause to the effect that I guarantee house-room to the bowl for a period of one year—assuming that no one has bought it from me before the year expires.'

" ' There would seem to be very little likelihood of that,' said I.

" ' Maybe—but Valder thought otherwise. Even if he's right I don't stand to gain anything.'

" AT this precise moment a servant entered with a card bearing the name of Anton Navagues upon a salver. Across the back of the card was scribbled in pencil, ' Ref. *Fam. Noire* bowl.'

" ' That's funny,' said Earle Leibner. ' Show him right in.'

" I had not seen Navagues for many years, and I was shocked at the havoc time

and adversity had wrought in his appearance. The man was a nervous wreck. His smile had gone, his mouth twitched, and the red of sleeplessness circled his eyes. Ignoring our presence, he walked straight to the bowl and stared at it like a man in a trance. Then, clasping it to his bosom, he turned and addressed Leibner.

"'You paid four dousan' dollar?'

"'Sure.'

"'You tink you know somping of porcelain?'

"Leibner made a wide gesture.

"'Take a look round.'

"But a dealer does not need to look to know when he is in the presence of a perfect collection. He feels its emanations.

"'I say you know noding—or you don't act so mad.'

"'Politeness don't cost much,' said Leibner. 'Why not try some?'

"Sweat was pouring from Anton's forehead.

"'You mean to show up ol' Dan for a diddler?"

"'Guess I like him too much for that.'

"'But he diddle you, I say.'

"'Opinion ain't evidence, son,' said Leibner.

Ignoring our presence, he walked straight to the bowl and stared at it like a man in a trance.

" Anton broke fresh ground.

" ' You don't want a muck like dis in your korlection.'

" ' Put it down,' said Leibner. ' Hands off that Jewel of Asia.'

" ' Oi, look 'ere ! You know me. Anton Navagues—der bes' authority of de vorld. If I say you was diddled then you *was* diddled.'

" ' Are you trying to put it across that the bowl's a stumer ? '

" ' Ja ! Oui, oui—yes, of course.'

" ' Well, now," said Earle Leibner, ' here's another of your way of thinking, Lord

Louis. What's a man going to do ? Maybe the pair of you's right, but, stumer or no stumer, that bowl took the bidding in open market to four thousand, and as such it's a property '

" I considered it wiser to say nothing, my dear Yorke, and even had I wished to do so I had no chance against Navagues. Starting with fifty pounds he advanced by leaps to an offer of three hundred and not a penny more. At that figure, with an abruptness which surprised me, Earle Leibner consented to sell.

" ' Guess I may not get another chance to unload,' said he. ' Better to close at a loss than wait till the bottom's out of the market. And I'll trouble you, Mr. Navagues, to draw a bearer cheque.'

" When Anton left the house the bowl was beneath his arm, and he looked fifteen years younger. At the door he said :—

" ' I tink when peoples 'ear that Valder's clients iss pleased to sell at less dan 'alf dey pay 'im for what he sold dem, he was not lookin' so like Napoleon after all.'

" ' Don't you worry,' said Earle Leibner. ' Dan can look after himself all right, all right.'

" SOME six weeks later these two giants, Dan and Anton, met at the house in Bayswater to re-discuss the question of partnership. By tacit consent the bowl was not mentioned, to which may be accounted the successful progress that was made. While engaged in conversation in the room upstairs one of Anton's servants, acting on previous instructions, placed the bowl in its original position on the console table in the hall.

" When, after their conversation, the two gentlemen descended the stairs, Dan paused and stared at it with First Consular gravity.

" ' So it's back again ? ' said he.

" Anton rubbed his hands and nodded.

" ' You tort you 'ave der best of me, Dan, but in der end I win, hein ? '

" ' How do you make that out ? It must have cost you something to get it ? '

" ' Nod a penny. I buy him for de dree hunded you pay to me.' His smile as he spoke the words was illuminated with triumph.

" Daniel Valder raised his immense shoulders.

" ' Your passage cost something,' said he.

" ' Passage and my expenses to America was two hunded and twenty-five.'

" ' Well, then ? '

" ' Dree hunded pound at fifteen per cent. interest for five years, Dan ! Two hunded and twenty-five.'

" Daniel Valder said nothing, but, fumbling in his breast pocket, he produced an envelope and took from it two cheques pinned together and accompanied by a short note. The latter he handed to Navagues, who read :—

" ' DEAR MR. VALDER,

' *In fulfilment of my arrangement with you, herewith Anton Navagues' cheque for three hundred pounds and my own for two-twenty-five, representing fifteen per cent. interest on that capital sum over a period of five years. Trust this is in order.*

' *Yours cordially,*

' EARLE LEIBNER.'

" For one minute Anton Navagues looked like a man who has died standing. Slowly his rigidity relaxed and a smile of real warmth and affection wreathed every feature of his face.

" ' Oi, oi, oi ! ' he cried. ' You was a great man, Daniel. I tink it break my heart if eider of us can diddle de odder ! Tomorrow we 'ave again de luncheon of pardnership, but dis time widout de onion.'

" Daniel pointed at the bowl—the bowl of contention.

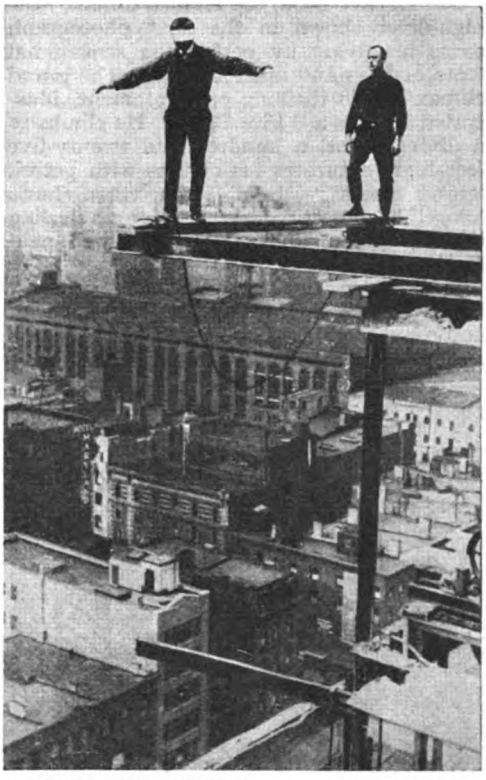
" ' And that thing ? ' said he.

" With a generosity for which no praise can be too high Navagues picked up the bowl and stood it on the doorstep.

" ' Oi ! It shall stand in our way no longer,' said he.

" Daniel Valder kicked it into the street as he passed from the house."

NERVE!



Walking blindfolded on a narrow plank twenty storeys above street level—but as cool as a cucumber!

DO these pictures make you feel dizzy?

They are actual photographs depicting men and women of iron nerve performing hair-raising feats, and are reproduced for the benefit of those readers who enjoy a good wholesome shudder.

On our right we have Sig. Smith, an American steeplejack, walking blindfolded along a narrow plank stretched between two girders of a New York "sky-scraper," twenty storeys above the ground. Mr. Smith does this sort of thing quite frequently. He says that it keeps him from growing older and helps him to maintain the self-confidence which his hazardous profession demands.

"If a man can walk along a narrow plank that lies upon the ground," he contends, "he can do the same thing above the street level. It is only a matter of confidence."

We prefer to take Mr. Smith's word for it.

Now look at the picture of Jack Redmond, the world's champion trick-shot golfer, teeing a ball upon a lady's forehead preparatory to driving it from the roof-top of the Whitehall Building, New York City. Mr. Redmond had previously performed this delicate feat upon the golf links, and was asked by a photographer whether he would dare to repeat it from the precarious position shown in the photograph. He merely replied: "Ask the lady—it's her risk, not mine."

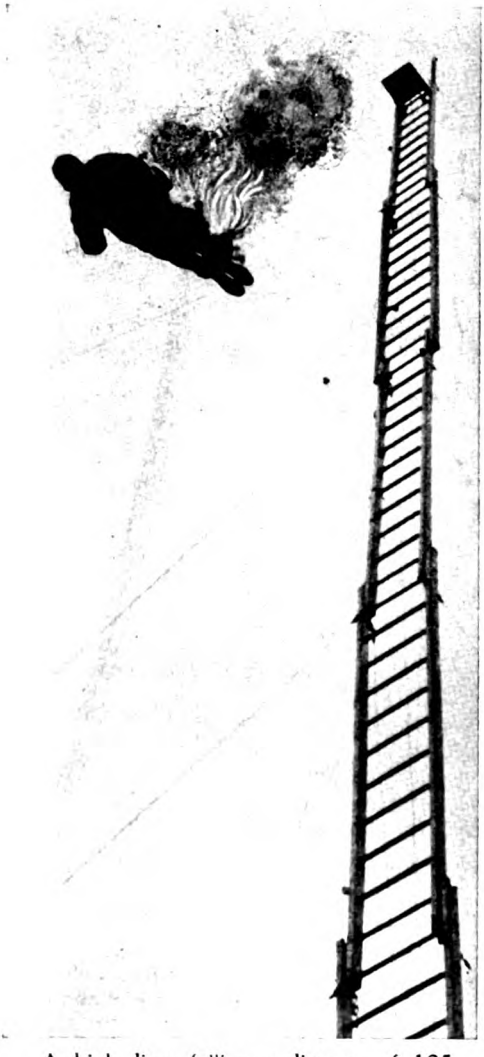
William Tell up-to-date. Teeing a golf-ball on a lady's brow preparatory to driving it from the roof-top.

The lady, with remarkable coolness, posed herself gracefully upon the roof-edge. Mr. Redmond, with commendable concentration, managed to keep his eye upon the ball. The ball went soaring over the distant buildings and was never seen again. Thus was added another chapter to the annals of the American "stunt."

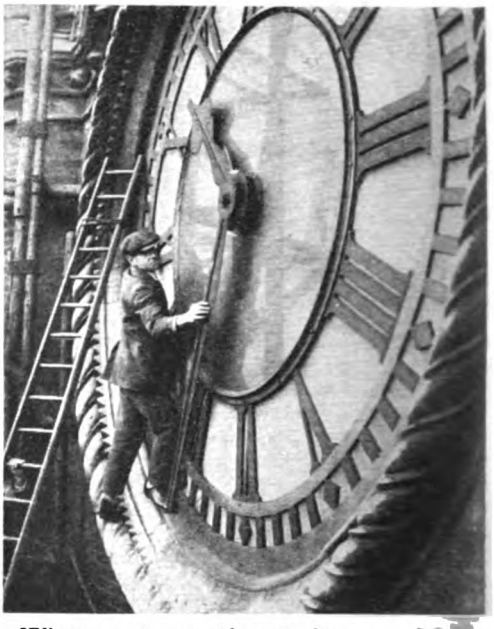
Described on the posters as

" Daredevil Wilson, the Human Comet," the high-diver shown in the next photograph earns his living by performing sensational feats at fairs and open-air *fêtes*. The grand climax of his thrilling entertainment, illustrated here, is a " Fire Dive." He climbs to a diving board a hundred and twenty-five feet high, saturates his clothes with petrol, ignites them with a torch, then hurls himself head-downwards and plunges sizzling into a tank of water. He gets well paid for it.

Not all of these sensational " stunts," however, are performed for the sake of notoriety or gain. For example, Londoners passing St. Pancras Railway Station not



A high-diver falling a distance of 125 feet with his clothes aflame.



Where a slip would spell disaster. Moving the minute-hand of England's highest clock, over St. Pancras Station.

His life in one hand. A "human fly" performing a daredevil stunt on a New York sky-scraper.

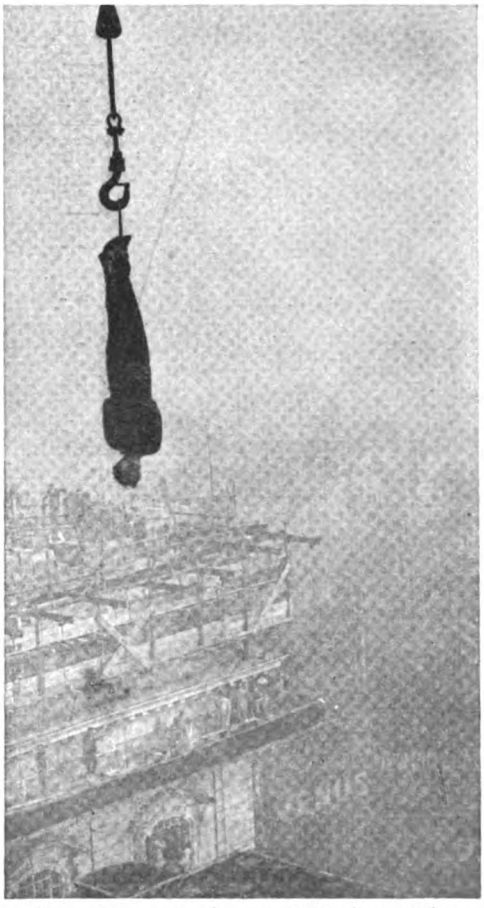
Balanced upon an eight-foot monocycle at the summit of the Cheops Pyramid, 480 feet above the ground.

long ago were enthralled by the sight of a man perched perilously upon the face of what is believed to be the highest clock in England. He was there merely for the purpose of cleaning and repairing the huge timepiece, and was hardly conscious of the trepidations he was producing in the hearts of the spectators below. An enterprising photographer saw him at work, climbed the slender ladder to the dizzy heights, and succeeded in obtaining the picture we reproduce, showing the nonchalant clock-repairer in the act of moving the great six-foot hand.

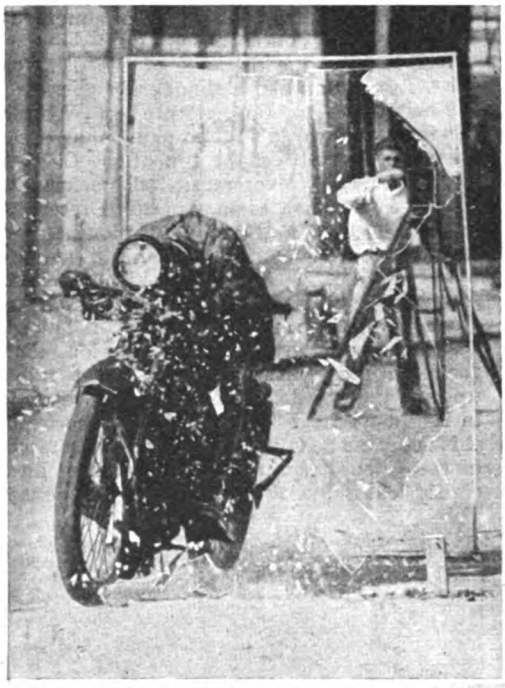
Perhaps the most terrifying picture of our collection—at least to those people who suffer from vertigo when looking downwards from great heights—is that of Harry Gardiner, the famous "human fly" of Washington, hanging by one hand from a slender staple twenty-four storeys above Broadway, New York. In performing this daring, intrepid, courageous, reckless, foolhardy, hare-brained feat (please choose your own adjective), he held his life literally in one hand. An attack of cramp, or a momentary relaxation of the muscles, and—— !

But look at the distance of the drop to the street, and make a shuddering guess !

Now turn to the picture of Walter Nilsson, the world's champion unicyclist, balancing himself on the top of the Cheops Pyramid. This clever music-hall performer, who is of Swedish birth, appeared recently upon the stage in London. Among other feats which he demonstrated with his single-wheel cycle, the saddle of which is eight feet from the ground, was one in which he stood upon the rim of the wheel, balanced the machine in a stationary position, and then, with astonishing agility, leapt right up into the saddle. Whilst he was touring in Egypt a friend "dared" him to perform this selfsame feat upon the uneven surface of the Cheops Pyramid, four hundred and eighty feet above the ground. The annexed



Struggling out of a strait-jacket whilst suspended head downward over Piccadilly Circus.



Smashing through a sheet of plate-glass on a motor-cycle travelling at sixty miles an hour.

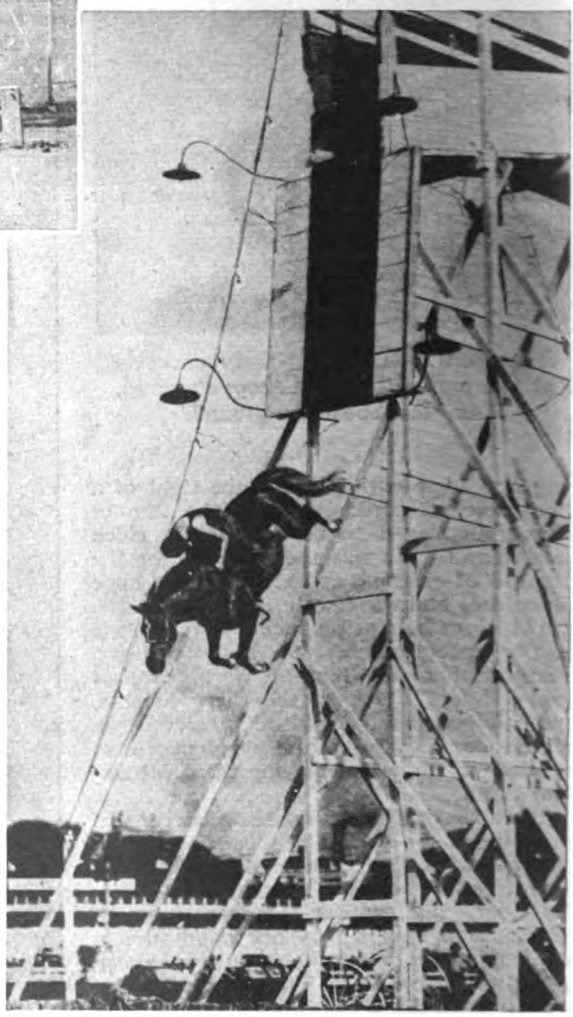
photograph bears witness to his success.

Another daring music-hall artiste is Murray, described as "The Australian Escapologist," who is a worthy successor to the late Harry Houdini. Murray undertakes to escape from ropes, chains, handcuffs, trunks, boxes, or any other restraining devices in which he may be confined. No matter how tightly he is bound he can wriggle his way out of a strait-jacket in almost as brief a time as it takes the average man to struggle out of a shrunken "sweater."

We have depicted him in the act of performing this astonishing feat whilst hanging head downwards high in the air above Piccadilly Circus. The strait-jacket, it should be explained, is made of tough, unstretchable material. The sleeves are tapered to a point so that the hands are enclosed. The wearer's arms are folded tightly across his chest, and the straps at the ends of the sleeves are carried round and strapped together at the back. The jacket itself is also strapped and buckled down the back.

When this photograph was taken Murray made his escape from the strait-jacket in thirteen minutes. He admitted afterwards that he could have wriggled out more quickly (he seldom takes more than four minutes to perform the same feat on the stage), but that, since he was doing the "stunt" for self-advertisement, he deliberately prolonged the suspense to ensure that a large number of people should see him !

Spider Matlock, a member of a Hollywood organization which specializes in breath-taking stunts for the cinema, has performed many spectacular and daring



A woman performer making a high-dive on horseback.

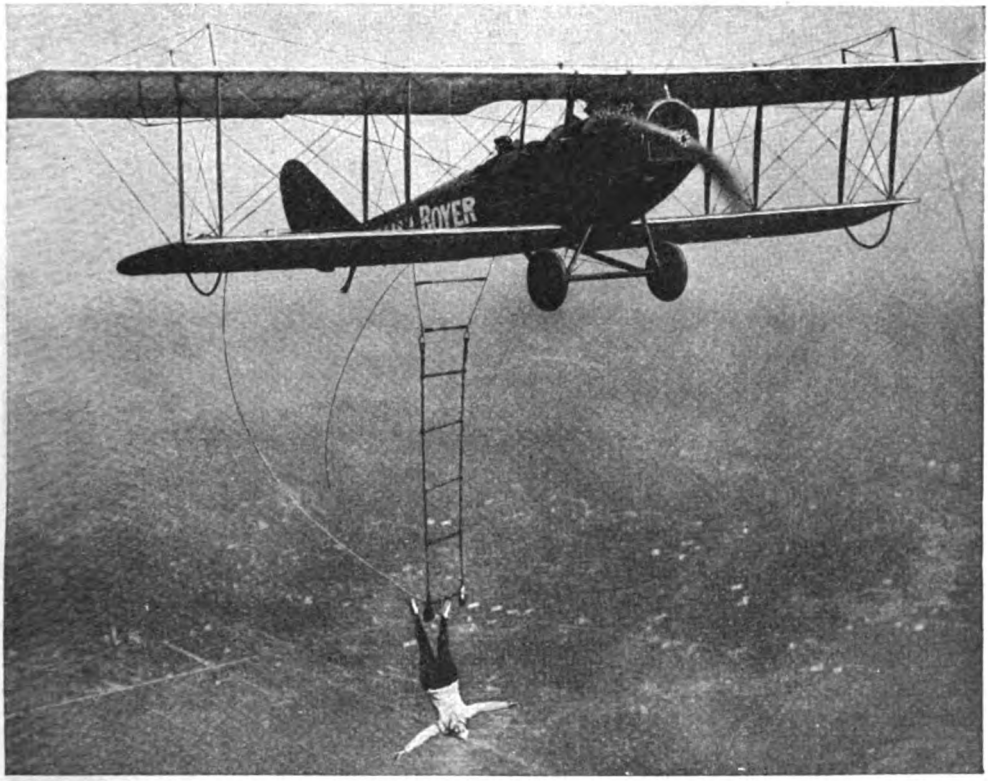
experiments, of which that illustrated on the previous page is probably the most remarkable. Travelling at the rate of sixty miles an hour, he rode full tilt at a sheet of plate-glass, shattering it almost to powder and passing through quite unharmed except for a few superficial scratches. Those who witnessed the feat declare that the sound of the impact resembled the report of a large gun.

Lest it should be imagined that nerve is the monopoly of the male sex it may be as well to turn our attention to one or two women "daredevils." Prominent among these is Miss Carver, who performs a unique high-dive on horseback. From a specially-constructed platform the highly-trained horse and its fearless rider plunge a distance of over forty feet to a tank of water—and the lady succeeds in maintaining her seat throughout the performance.

Equally hazardous are the feats performed by Miss Lillian Boyer, who clambers with amazing agility and assurance over all parts of an aeroplane whilst it is flying thousands of feet above the ground. In this picture she is seen hanging by one foot from a rope ladder suspended beneath the 'plane.

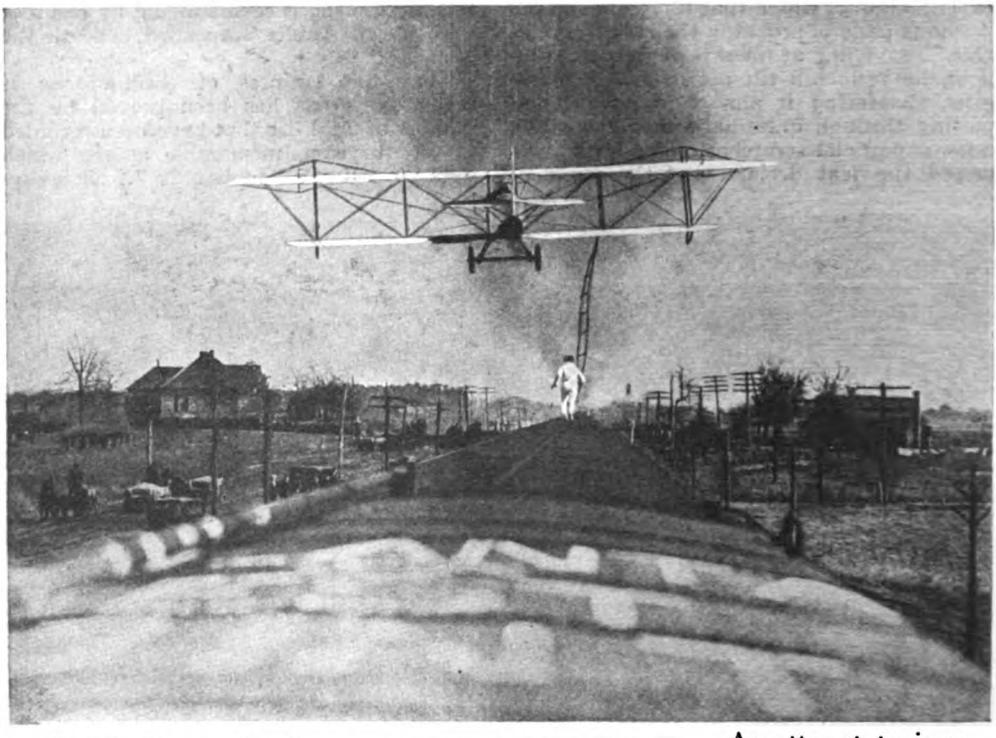
That the business of thrill-making is really dangerous has been proved by the number of fatalities that have been recorded in recent years, memorable among which were the fall of a "human fly" from a sky-scraper in New York and the crashing of an aeroplane which flew beneath the arch of the Eiffel Tower and then fouled a wire stay.

The incident depicted in our next photograph came very near to tragedy. For moving-picture purposes Barney Rowe, of the Cody Flying Circus, attempted to jump from the top of a fast-moving train on to a ladder which was hanging from an aeroplane travelling at an even greater speed. Three times he essayed the feat. The first time he missed the ladder. The second time he missed his footing. And upon the third occasion the dangling ladder caught in a telegraph pole, nearly wrecking the 'plane. After that the pilot apparently decided that it was time for tea !



A fearless young lady suspended by one foot from a rope ladder beneath an aeroplane in full flight.

Nerve !



An attempt to jump from an express train to a fast-moving 'plane, which nearly ended in disaster.

Performing a toe-dance on the anchor of the s.s. "Berengaria" in the New York docks.

Miss Dorothy Rae, a dainty toe-dancer, recently provided the New York photographers with a novel picture by posing gracefully upon the anchor of the s.s. *Berengaria* whilst the giant liner was in dock.

Had she slipped from this precarious position she would have fallen sixty feet into the water.

Who was it that said: "Sweet are the uses of advertisement"?

Following so many aerial "thrillers," the photograph of Mlle. Maria la Corse, the famous

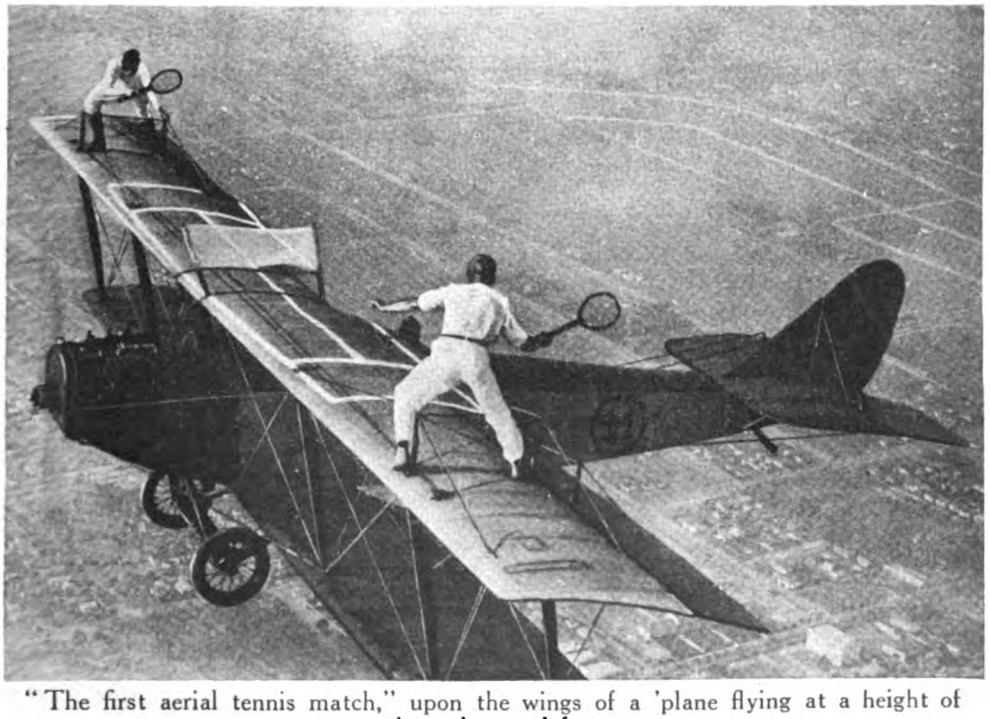
A woman trainer thrusting her head into the mouth of a lion.

Continental animal trainer, thrusting her head into the jaws of a lion seems comparatively tame. However, it must be remembered that the beast is well-equipped dentally, that he has a large mouth, and when one comes to look into it—but perhaps that is best left to the lady !

You would like just one more dizzy picture to complete the collection ? Then gaze upon the photograph of the first aerial tennis match on record. Yes, the stunt was performed at Los Angeles. Here is the photographer's description of his picture, which is genuine and unfaked :—

" Miss Gladys Roy returning a fast one across the net to Ivan Unger, three thousand feet up at Los Angeles."

Readers of a scientific turn of mind may ask how these daring tennis players managed to prevent the ball from going overboard every time it was struck. We give it up.



" The first aerial tennis match," upon the wings of a 'plane flying at a height of three thousand feet.

The Ninety-ninth Thread

AN EXPLOIT OF PUDGY PETE & CO.

By

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

Illustrated by
S. ABBEY

The Hon. George Vincent Angus and his old school-fellow, Peter Bragg—commonly known by his "House" nickname of "Pudgy Pete"—are conducting a private detective agency on somewhat novel lines. Peter Bragg is a man of considerable wealth, and the firm is therefore able to undertake cases where the financial rewards of success are small. In the present case they are set an apparently hopeless task—to save a man from being hanged for murder, whom ninety-nine people out of a hundred would have pronounced guilty.

ANGUS, pleased with the world and himself, happy at the freedom from sartorial restraint indulged in at this his favourite annual holiday, strolled along the lawn at Goodwood towards the Grand Stand, his card in his hand, waiting for the numbers to go up for the next race. At the corner of Tattersall's enclosure he came face to face with Charles Hunley, the famous K.C., a fellow-member of his club, but a man with whom he had only the slightest acquaintance. Rather to his surprise, the barrister stopped him. The usual casual greetings were exchanged, and afterwards Hunley took his companion by the arm and led him back along the lawn.

"I wonder, Angus," he asked, "whether you remember the Coulson case, a few years ago?"

Angus shook his head.

"Can't say that I do," he confessed. "What sort of case was it?"

"I suppose it was before you entered upon your peculiar line of activities," the K.C. mused. "The case was the Crown versus Coulson, and I was for Coulson."

"And the charge?"

"Murder! We got it reduced, during the hearing, to manslaughter, and the jury, if they could have done so, would have let the man off altogether. Would it bore you if I just ran over the case for a minute? I'll tell you why afterwards."

"Of course not," Angus replied. "The numbers won't be up for another quarter of an hour. Have a cigarette."

He passed his case. The two men sat down upon an unoccupied seat, and Hunley looked thoughtfully for a moment out across the richly-wooded country towards the Solent.

"Coulson was an accountant's clerk," he began, "married to an actress—dead wrong 'un, I should say the lady was. He came back one night and found her *in flagrante delicto*. Coulson was a small man, but as brave as a lion. He went there and then for his wife's lover, and they had the hell of a time of it. The other fellow was twice his size, but just as Coulson was passing out he snatched at a heavy copper ornament on the sideboard, fetched his opponent one at a particular spot at the back of his head, and, in short, killed him. Coulson himself was in hospital for five weeks before he could be tried, and if the judge and jury could have had their way I don't believe he'd have gone to prison

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for a day. As it was he was charged as soon as he could stand up, and got the lightest possible sentence—three years, with a strong recommendation to mercy. That was about two years and six months ago."

Angus nodded.

"With good behaviour remittance," he remarked, "he'll be out directly."

"He's out now," Hunley announced. "I've just seen him."

"Where? On the course?"

The barrister nodded.

"I went up to bet with Sammy Martin in Tattersall's ring," he confided, "and I noticed that he had a new clerk. I didn't recognize him at first. He's a pale, undersized, shrunken little fellow. Then he looked up, and I knew him. He knew me, too."

"Rather a come-down for him, isn't it?" Angus suggested. "I should have thought if his case had excited so much sympathy one of his pals could have found him a better job."

Hunley looked for a moment idly into the faces of the passers-by.

"I'm afraid it's one he chose himself, Angus. You see—I kept my mouth shut, of course, for I wasn't going to do anything to aggravate the case against him—but it fell to my lot to tell him at the hospital that the man was dead, and that he'd be charged with murder."

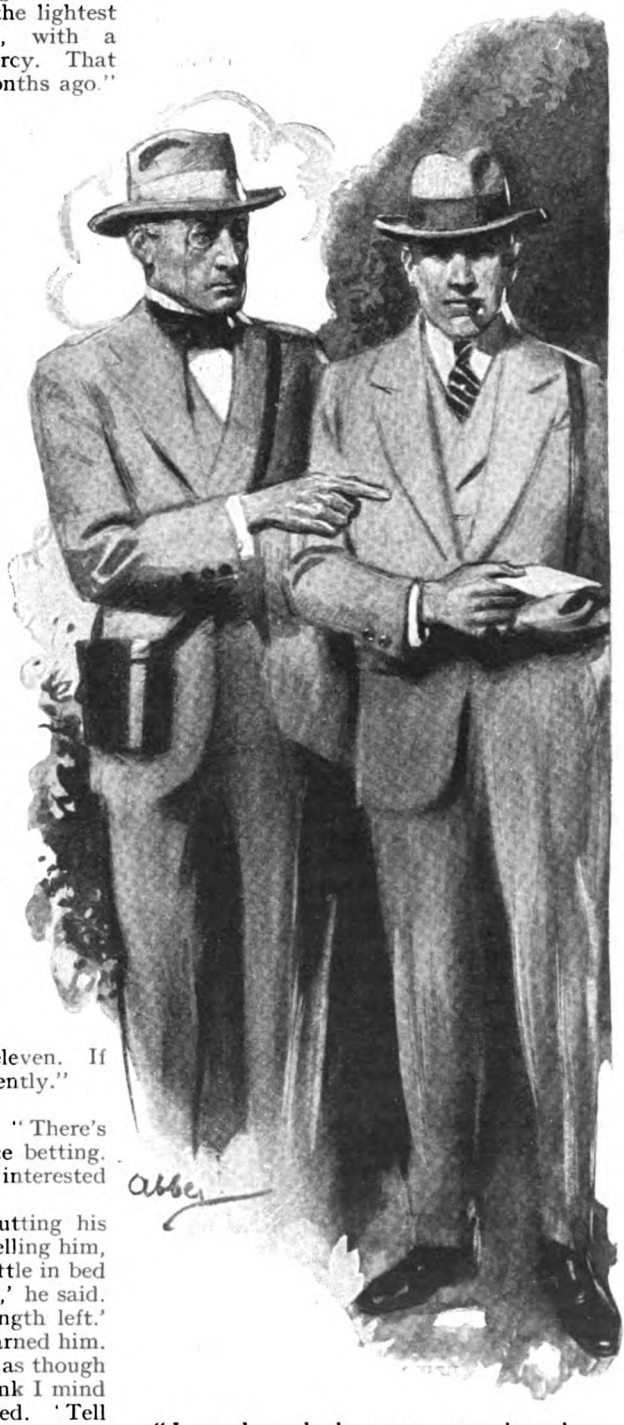
"Nasty job that!"

"Yes, but not in the way you'd have thought," Hunley continued, taking out his glasses for a moment and looking at the numbers which had just gone up. "One, three, five, eight, eleven. If you want to be off I'll finish presently."

Angus glanced at his card.

"Nothing doing," he decided. "There's only one horse in it, and no place betting. I shall have a rest. Besides, I'm interested in what you are telling me."

"Well," Hunley proceeded, putting his glasses away, "I rather funked telling him, but he simply raised himself a little in bed and smiled. 'That's good news,' he said. 'I was afraid I hadn't the strength left.' 'You know what it means?' I warned him. He looked at me for a moment as though he didn't understand. 'You think I mind bring tried for murder?' he asked. 'Tell me,' he went on, 'do you think they'll hang me?' 'Not a chance of it,' I assured him. 'The charge will probably be reduced to



"I wonder whether you remember the Coulson case, a few years ago?"

manslaughter, and on the judge's summing up I should say that you'll get a light sentence.' He smiled again. It wasn't a nice smile, Angus. It made me curious at once to know what was at the back of his mind. And then I asked him point-blank. He hesitated only for a moment. 'The first luxury I shall enjoy when I am free,' he confided, 'will be to kill Ada. I hadn't the strength that night.' . . . The man's character came out in the evidence. He was a mild little inoffensive accountant's clerk, saving money every week, wonderful at his job, thought the world of by his employers—they paid for his defence, by the by—a man whom all his neighbours liked, although the men called him rather a milksop, and he lay there, just come back from the borderland between life and death, and in perfect sincerity he told me that the only regret he had was that he hadn't been able to kill the woman with whom he'd been living for eleven years!"

"He has probably changed his mind after all this time in prison," Angus observed.

Hunley shrugged his shoulders.

"Maybe," he admitted, "but I fancy not. I spoke to him just now. He pretended not to recognize me, but I tell you, Angus, there was exactly the same look in his face as when I talked to him that day in the hospital, and when I said good-bye to him before he went down to the cells."

"What has become of the woman?"

"That is where the drama of the thing begins. She is here, on the course, and I am perfectly convinced that Coulson has only accepted this job with a bookmaker because he knows that sooner or later he'll come across her. Racing—it came out at the trial—was her downfall. She could never refuse an invitation to a race meeting. It was there she met the man whom he killed, and I'm very much afraid, from the look of things, that she's found another protector of the same ilk."

"Have you ever spoken to her?" Angus asked. "She ought to be warned."

The other nodded.

"I shall do that," he said. "I thought I'd tell you this, Angus, because one or two of your little exploits have come my way, and I felt that this was the sort of affair which might interest you. Knowing the man, I'm afraid there's nothing we could do, unless we could keep them apart, and I honestly tell you that I don't believe that's possible. I have the feeling that if she were to change her name and bury herself in San Francisco or New York, or find her way to the Falkland Islands or the Steppes of Tartary, he'd find her. He's that patient, dogged sort. He'd come quietly along one day, and before she knew he'd be there with that queer smile of his. I'd do anything to prevent trouble, because I rather like the little fellow. He's been treated leniently once, but if he kills the woman he'll swing for it."

"Where is the woman?" Angus inquired, curiously.

The K.C. rose to his feet and brushed some cigarette ashes from the waistcoat of his neat grey tweed suit.

"She's on the third car from the entrance in the front row," he confided, "dressed in rose colour—you can't mistake her—with a large hat. Go and have a look at her, and then make a little bet with Martin. You can mention my name. By the by, are you staying down here?"

"I'm over near Chichester, with some friends," Angus replied.

"We shall meet again, then," were Hunley's parting words. "I'm coming every day, and I suppose you will."

The two men separated. Angus strolled from the lawn into the R.A.C. enclosure, and loitered by the third car—an ostentatious-looking limousine, painted red, with brass lamps and showy carriage work. There was no mistaking the woman—a slightly faded type, with masses of fair hair, of which she made a brave display, large eyes, artificially beringed, features which might once have been good but which showed signs now of coarsening. She was standing by the door of the car, her card in her hand, talking eagerly to a man who looked like an overgrown jockey in a consumption—a man with a keen hard face, thin lips and narrow eyes, but with a pasty, almost green complexion. He was watching the horses go by, and the very way he glanced at them seemed to indicate knowledge. The woman hung upon his scant words. They seemed to be without any other companions, but a large luncheon basket stood open, and there were two or three empty champagne bottles scattered around. . . . Presently there broke the hoarse murmur of voices which, with the accompanying bugle, denoted the start of the race. The woman thrust her hand into her bag and took out a small packet of notes. She passed them over to the chauffeur, who hurried off towards the bookmakers, who were crowded round the rails. Then she climbed on to the back seat of the limousine and stood there, the glasses glued to her eyes.

GOODWOOD was at its best that day. The long season had come to an end, and the world was on holiday. Angus, from the rails in front of the lawn, watched the finish of an unexciting race, joined his friends for a time in their box, and afterwards strolled once more to Tattersall's. Mr. Sammy Martin greeted

There was no mistaking the woman. She was standing by the door of the car, talking eagerly to a man who looked like an overgrown jockey in a consumption.

him cheerfully, and accepted his modest bet with enthusiasm. Angus, whilst he asked for some other prices, glanced at the little man busy entering his name in a book. For a moment he had almost a shock. He had somehow gathered from Hunley's description that the central figure in this sordid drama was barely more than middle-aged. The man's hair, however, was iron grey, his face almost phenomenal. He was like the tragical lay figure of some ventriloquist—the perfect human automaton. One could scarcely believe that he really heard or that the words which passed from his lips were not mechanically contrived. Angus made another and a foolish bet for the sake of lingering. As he turned away he ran once more into Hunley.

"Well, I've seen both the figures in your little drama," Angus confided, as they moved off together to have a drink. "They are each in their way interesting. Is there anything to be done?"

"Nothing. I dare say the whole thing will fizzle out. I've been talking to Coulson."

"What did he say?"

"I asked him why he was doing such work, when I happened to know that his old firm would have taken him back. His only reply was that he could never bear the life back in his old office. He was perfectly satisfied. Martin told me that he was the best clerk he'd ever had."

"You think he's only taken the job to watch the racecourses?" Angus asked.

"I'm sure of it," was the terse reply.

SO was Angus sure of it on the following morning before the first race. He was staying in a happy-go-lucky household where cars were plentiful, and soon after breakfast, in his own little two-seater, he made his way to the course. It was almost two hours before the first race, but the stream of early comers were already spreading themselves about. In the R.A.C. enclosure a few chauffeurs and servants were setting up the luncheon tables. There was a good deal of unpacking in the tents, and a thin line of motor-cars appearing over the hill. Angus's enterprise was almost at once rewarded. There was no mistaking the stiff little figure in plain dark clothes and bowler hat of whom he caught sight within five minutes of his arrival. In an unostentatious way he kept him in view for the best part of an hour. He saw him walk slowly past the seats on the lawn, pausing to examine every card, watched him make a circuit of the tents where refreshments were already being dispensed, waited for him half an hour whilst he made a tour of the Grand Stand and boxes, and finally, on the other side of the railings, walked in line with him as he made his way slowly towards the front of the R.A.C. enclosure.

Angus himself looked eagerly towards the third place, and was conscious of a curious little thrill of relief when he saw that the brazen-looking red car with the brass lamps had not yet arrived. Coulson, however, wandered far afield. He disappeared at last down the course, and Angus lingered near the opening to the enclosure, talking to some acquaintances. Cars began to arrive with greater frequency, and, so far as Angus had been able to see, Coulson had not yet returned. Suddenly the red car drove into the enclosure—open, too, as Angus noticed with a little sense of disquietude. The man and woman were there, still alone, the woman in blue with a large picture hat, under which, notwithstanding the brilliant colouring of her lips, her features seemed more pinched and her eyes deeper set even than on the day before. They drove into their place. The man lit a cigar, and stood about with his hands in his pockets, watching the luncheon basket unstrapped from the back. The woman sat for a moment looking into a small mirror and arranging her slightly-disordered hair. As soon as she was satisfied, she too stepped on to the turf. And then, up the broad walk between the lines of cars, came the little bookmaker's clerk.

If Angus had expected anything in the nature of a dramatic *rencontre* he was doomed to disappointment. The man and the woman stood side by side studying their cards—the man sallower and more unprepossessing in appearance than ever as he puffed stolidly at his cigar without removing it from his lips, his head almost touching his companion's. At first it seemed as though the sinister searcher would have passed them without recognition. Angus, a little in the background, watched his slow approach, took note of the set immobility of his face. He was looking from side to side without obvious curiosity, yet with an air of patient expectancy. He reached the car. He was in the act of passing when, by some chance, the woman looked up and glanced over towards the number board. She saw nothing of the insignificant little person a few yards away—but he saw her. Not a muscle of his face moved, not a gleam of satisfaction shone even in his eyes. He slackened his speed, however, drew a pencil and notebook from his pocket, and made a note of the number of the car. The man and woman were again busy with their cards, but the chauffeur stood almost in Coulson's way. The latter addressed him, and Angus, by moving a step forward, heard his question.

"Isn't your master's name Pallett," he inquired—"Andrew Pallett, of Sydenham?"

The chauffeur shook his head.

"We live out at Hampstead," he answered —"Carnsforth Buildings. That's the governor there. Merridew, his name is."

"Thank you very much," Coulson said. "A remarkable resemblance."

He walked on. His search was ended. He looked neither to the right nor to the left. Yet, as he passed within a few inches of Angus, there was not a single sign of satisfaction in his face. He had found out what he had become a bookmaker's clerk to discover, but, so far as outward appearances were concerned, his success had left him indifferent. He was looking just the same when, before every race, drawn there by some attraction which he failed to analyse, Angus went up to make some small bet. Down in the motor enclosure, after luncheon, the woman's peaked face became flushed, she exulted loudly over a win, she sat arm in arm with her companion, smoked a cigarette or two, and promenaded the lawn, still gripping his arm; but, back in Tattersall's enclosure, the little clerk's pencil moved swiftly and always with deadly accuracy. Once more he had become the automaton.

So he remained until the end of the meeting, and Angus's final glimpse of him was as he followed his principal out of the enclosure some time after the last race, a soiled blue mackintosh buttoned up to his chin for shelter against the sudden squall of rain, his satchel under his arm, his eyes fixed upon his employer's broad back. Angus watched the two climb into a car together and start off Londonwards. A few minutes later, Angus, driving his own coupé, had to draw up whilst the stream of cars crawled by on their way to the main road. Amongst them was the red car, also turned Londonwards.

"Isn't your master's name Pallett?" he inquired.

PETER BRAGG, alias Pudgy Pete, Angus's partner, had absented himself in Monte Carlo for two months during the winter season, so Angus, after Goodwood, found himself with a prolonged vacation on his hands. The affair of the little bookmaker's clerk had never been altogether absent from his thoughts, and for the first few weeks he had scanned his newspaper every morning for news of a tragedy. As time went on, however, the affair began to lose its significance. Yet when he strolled into his office, bronzed and cheerful, on the first day of his return to London, he found, seated in his clients' chair, the little man whom he had never altogether forgotten.

"This gentleman is waiting to see you," Peter Bragg explained, after he had shaken hands. "He wouldn't confide his business to me—says you would remember him."

"I remember you, of course," Angus said, turning towards his visitor. "Mr. Hunley told me your story, and I saw you at Goodwood."

"I saw you too, sir," Coulson observed. "I felt that you were interested—I knew that you were when you waited in the R.A.C. enclosure to see whether I should find my wife and Merridew."

Angus nodded sympathetically.

"I hope you've got over all that nonsense you were talking to Mr. Hunley," he said.

"Perhaps I have and perhaps I haven't, sir," was the quiet reply. "Have you seen the papers this morning?"

"Not yet," Angus admitted.

"Better read a certain paragraph first, sir, before I explain my business," Coulson suggested.

Peter Bragg passed across the newspaper in which he himself had been engrossed. Angus gave a little start as he read the headlines:—

"MAN AND WOMAN FOUND DEAD IN A HAMPSTEAD FLAT."

There were very few details. A man named Merridew, a betting agent, and a woman bearing the name of Coulson, although she was supposed to be divorced from her husband, had been discovered by one of the servants at Carnsforth Buildings, Hampstead, dead, early in the morning, both shot through the head. A revolver had been found by the side of the man, and an arrest was expected hourly. Angus threw down the paper and turned to his visitor.

"Well?"

"I have some facts to lay before you," the latter announced, calmly. "Please both listen. Two heads are better than one. The woman was my wife. I killed her first lover, and went to prison for three years for it. I swore when I came out that I meant to kill her, and, if she had found another protector, to kill him also. That is common knowledge. I have loitered in the neighbourhood of that flat in Hampstead for weeks, keeping them always in a state of nervous alarm. They have told a dozen people of their terror of me. I visited them at the flat last night. The revolver found by the side of Merridew is mine. I believe that I was seen to enter and leave the flat, yet I did not shoot either of them. They were alive when I left them. I have no idea how they met their deaths. I know perfectly well that I shall be arrested before the day is over. Will you do what you can for me?"

Angus sat back in his chair. A fit of speechlessness was upon him. His partner leaned across the table.

"Listen," he said. "Let me get this right! You killed the woman's first lover. You went to prison. You threatened to kill her when you came out, and anyone she might be with. You've hung round their flat. You were seen to enter it last night. They are both shot dead. Your revolver is lying on the floor. You were seen to leave the flat. What chance, I ask you, has anyone got to do anything for you?"

"There must be a chance somewhere," Coulson insisted, "because I did not kill them."

"What did you go there for, then?" Peter Bragg asked, patiently.

"To tell them that I'd changed my mind. I have turned over a new leaf. I am engaged to be married."

"If your present story is the true one," Peter Bragg remarked, "I think that coincidence has made you the most unfortunate man in the world."

"Listen here," Coulson continued, addressing Angus. 'I've heard about you. You're not in this business like the police, to worry along the routine ways. Here is your one chance in a lifetime. On the face of it, it's a hundred to one that I'm guilty. I'm not. Try to find that ninety-ninth thread."

"Can you help?" Angus asked.

The man shook his head.

"I cannot," he admitted. "I am just like everyone else will be. I should believe myself guilty, if I didn't know I wasn't."

"I'll do what I can," Angus decided, "but I warn you——"

"You needn't trouble," the other interrupted. "I'm not going to attempt to get away. I shall be arrested before the day is out, of course. I shall spend the night in the prison cells, trying to imagine what happened."

" One word more," Angus begged, with his hand upon the door knob. " There's no question of suicide and murder, I suppose ? "

" Why should there be ? " was the hopeless rejoinder. " They appear to have been the most devoted couple—never seen apart, and Merridew is supposed to have been a very wealthy man. I'm afraid the neighbours' evidence would soon settle that. You'll do your best, Mr. Angus ? "

" I'll do anything that can be done," Augus promised, a little dubiously.

ANGUS dined a few nights afterwards at his club with Hunley, who had wandered in late and taken the place beside him.

" So our little friend kept his word," Angus observed.

Hunley nodded gloomily.

" Silly fool ! " he muttered. " He got off once, and now he must go and absolutely pray for what he's certain to get. I'd defend him if he had a leg to stand on, but he hasn't. To make things worse, he's lost his nerve—wants to plead ' not guilty.' "

" I suppose there's no doubt that he did do it ? " Angus asked.

The K.C. shrugged his shoulders.

" My dear fellow," he pointed out, " he announced his intention of killing them right and left. He's been frightening them to death for weeks. He's somehow or other become possessed of a skeleton key to their flat. He's seen to enter it, he's seen to leave. His revolver is found there ; the two are dead."

" I know," Angus remarked, " but he says he didn't do it."

The K.C. scoffed.

" Every man's nerve breaks now and then."

" Can I look over the rooms ? "

" If you wish to, with pleasure. I'll give you a card to Ryan of Scotland Yard. He's in charge. He'll be there to-morrow, I believe."

Hunley drew his case from his pocket, scribbled on the back of a visiting-card, and passed it over to Angus. As though by common consent, they dined thenceforward without a mention of Coulson's name. Angus, however, excused himself from Bridge afterwards. He spent the rest of the evening in the neighbourhood of Carnsforth Buildings.

At eleven o'clock on the following morning, Inspector Ryan and Angus ascended by the lift to the fifth floor of Carnsforth Buildings, and the former exchanged a word or two with the policeman who was on guard at the entrance to the flat. It was that few minutes' conversation which probably saved Coulson's life, for in the interval of waiting and looking around Angus was attracted by the letter shoot just outside the door. He studied it for a few minutes thoughtfully. Presently the Inspector produced his keys, and they entered the darkened hall and passed into the sitting-room, which had been the scene of the tragedy. The Inspector took Angus by the arm.

" I don't know that there's much to show you of interest here, sir," he remarked. "The chalk marks show just where each body was lying. Look round the room as much as you like. My job this morning is just to see if there are any bullet marks in the walls. Nothing else has been touched."

Angus, with a little shiver, drew up one of the blinds and took stock of his surroundings. The room was furnished as might have been expected—with a certain amount of ostentation, but a great deal of vulgarity—heavy plush chairs with carved oak backs, an elaborately-carved sideboard, a thick carpet, a number of meretricious ornaments, a piano draped with faded silk, photographs in silver frames, even a few fans upon the walls. In a corner of the room was a small writing table. The portion which let down, however, was closed.

" Have you the keys of this, Inspector ? " Angus asked.

The Inspector nodded, and selected one.

" We've been through the contents," he observed. " Very little except bills and sporting tips. We didn't disturb things more than we could help. There wasn't anything to look for really."

" Just so," Angus murmured.

The Inspector turned the key and the top slid down. Inside there was a blotting-pad and an inkstand. The pen, Angus decided, had probably been used within the last few days, and there was still ink in the pot. The blotting-pad he lifted carefully out and took to the light.

" There's an address of a letter here, Inspector," he remarked.

The Inspector was not greatly interested.

" Might have been written at any time," he commented. " Besides, we're not looking for the murderer, are we ? He's safe under lock and key."

Angus made no reply. He was holding the fragment of blotting-paper up to the window.

" This is probably," he observed, " the last letter written by Merridew. He must have had a brother. This is addressed to R. Merridew, but I'm hanged if I can read the rest of it."

The Inspector crossed the room a little languidly. He was only concerned with finishing up the technical details of his perfect case. He did his best, however, to decipher the remainder of the address.

" It's some club of two syllables in the W.C.2 district," Angus went on. " Do you mind if I turn my men on to it while you finish your job here? If I discover the letter, of course I'll do nothing without you."

The Inspector smiled.

" Why, you go right ahead, sir," he agreed. " I've got to be able to swear as to the condition of these walls. It will take me about an hour. I shall be at Scotland Yard afterwards."

" It's R. Merridew, Esquire, all right," he decided, " and it is at some club in W.C.2. Are you attaching any importance to this, sir?"

" This much," Angus said earnestly. " On the face of it, Coulson is undoubtedly the murderer. Curiously enough, however, although he pleaded guilty to the first affair all right, this time he swears that he never killed either of these people. Very well—it's a thin chance enough, but let's give him that chance. If he didn't—if there was anyone else concerned—the last letter written by Merridew might help us."

" That's quite right, sir," the Inspector admitted doubtfully.

The blotting-pad he lifted carefully out and took to the light.

" There's an address of a letter here, Inspector," he remarked.

Angus, with the sheet of blotting-paper in his pocket, took his leave.

IT was barely midday when Angus, with two of his Strand House *employés*, started the rounding up of all the social clubs in the district comprised by W.C.2; it was nearly ten o'clock when he found himself

seated on a hard cane chair opposite the letter rack of the Alpha Club in Henter Street, W.C.2, watching a letter in the rack and waiting for the arrival of Inspector Ryan, himself under the uneasy observation of a seedy-looking hall-porter, collarless and unshaven. An occasional member, pausing on his way in or out, glanced furtively towards him, and passed hurriedly by. There were other indications of the fact that the Alpha Club was scarcely an establishment of high social standing, but Angus had only one anxiety—that the letter should remain where it was until the arrival of the Inspector. When at last a car stopped outside, not only the Inspector himself but the Deputy Chief Commissioner of the Police made their appearance. The uniform of the former reduced the hall-porter, who had risen to his feet, to stupefied silence. Angus advanced to greet the new-comers.

"There's the letter, Inspector," he pointed out, "which, according to my theory, was written by Merridew, on the night of his death, to his brother. If there is any other explanation of the tragedy besides the obvious one, it is to be found there."

The Deputy Chief Commissioner turned to the hall-porter.

"Mr. Merridew is a member of the club?" he inquired.

"He's a member, sir," the man admitted, "but he ain't often here."

"Do you know where he is now?"

"I did hear," the man ventured, "that he was in France somewhere."

"You don't know when to expect him back?"

"Not exactly, sir. There's a good few as calls here says he owes them money."

The Deputy Chief Commissioner withdrew the letter from the rack.

"I'm taking possession of this letter in the name of the law," he announced, curtly. "Have you a room here where we can be alone for a few minutes?"

The man, properly impressed, ushered them into a bare little waiting-room, and turned on a jet of gas. The Deputy Chief Commissioner produced a penknife and cut the flap of the envelope. He spread the letter out upon the table. The three men read it together:—

9, *Carnsforth Buildings,*
Hampstead, N.W.

Dear Bob,—

I can do nothing to help you. It's all up with me, anyway. I have spent my last shilling—sold the car yesterday—and Ada knows it. By the time you get this I shall have gone out.

Bob, you've been right to stay free from women. You know what Ada's been to me. Worse and worse I've been getting for weeks and months. Yesterday I went to a doctor. He didn't spend five minutes over me, looked at me in a queer, old-fashioned sort of way. "Are you honest?" he asked. "You don't know what's the matter with you?" "I'm damned if I do," I told him, "or I wouldn't have spent a guinea coming here." "You've either been taking or you've been given arsenic steadily for the last three months," he said. "It's gone too far. I should get into a hospital quick, if I were you. I can do nothing."

Arsenic, Bob! What do you think of that?

It's been a queer night. I got back to Carnsforth Buildings and found Ada dolling herself up to go out. I've got used to that lately. It's that fellow Trumbull she is making up to, but that's all over now. I took her clothes off her and locked the door. She squealed and cursed, but it wasn't any use. I didn't tell her what I had found out. I left that. I didn't tell her I was broke, although she'd pretty well guessed it, but while we were sitting there, who should come but that little devil Coulson—turned up this very night after all the months we've dodged him. I thought he'd found the courage at last, and I just laughed. It seemed like saving me a job. He came in just in his quiet way, and Ada, she was pretty well scared to death. He took an automatic pistol from his pocket and laid it upon the table. "You don't need to be afraid of me any more," he said, quietly. "I've found a girl and I'm going to settle down. As for you, Ada," he went on, "you've been the worst wife to me any man ever had. I've been meaning to kill you both for months—just lingering over it. I was wrong. You aren't worth it. You need never be afraid of me any more. There's my gun. Do as you please!" And with that he turned his back on us and went out. We heard the lift go down. Ada, she was all excited-like. "Thank God!" she exclaimed. "Jim, I'll have a drink on that!" She went trembling towards the sideboard, and I picked up the pistol. "There's another besides him means to make an end of you, my woman," I said, "and that's the man you've been poisoning for the last three months." With that she squealed, but I shot her. . . .

I've had three drinks, Bob. I've found a stamp, and I'll shove this in the shoot. When I've done that I'm off myself. If there's anything left, it's yours, but there won't be much.

So long!

JIM.

The three men looked at one another. The Deputy Chief Commissioner placed the letter in the envelope, scrutinized the postmark, and, opening the door, called to the hall-porter.

"This letter," he asked, "you're prepared to swear that it came through the post in the usual way?"

"I took it from the postman myself, sir," the man replied.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner shook hands with Angus.

"If there is one thing in the world, Mr. Angus," he said, "which could reconcile us to the activities of you amateur gentlemen, it is the fact that you have vision. You have saved us a bad shock this time, anyhow."

They had passed out into the stuffy little hall, and for a moment Angus made no reply. He was looking at the dilapidated letter-rack. But for a chance, that letter in its soiled envelope, addressed in shaky handwriting to R. Merridew, Esquire, might have mouldered there behind the worn tape whilst Coulson had hanged.

"It's a matter of psychological conviction against circumstantial evidence, sir," he said, after a pause. "Coulson's guilt seemed a certainty, and yet, as man to man, I felt that he was telling me the truth."

"That's where the humanity of the thing comes in," the Deputy Chief Commissioner confessed. "As man to policeman, he wouldn't have had a chance."

TWO months later, Mr. Coulson, smartly dressed in a light grey suit with racing glasses swung around his shoulder, and carrying a bowler hat in his hand, presented himself at Angus's office. He was accompanied by a very charming young woman, neatly dressed for a day's racing.

"I've called to know what fee I owe you, sir," Coulson announced. "This is my wife—Sam Martin's daughter. She'd like to help me pay it."

Angus smiled.

"Well, what's his life worth to you, Mrs. Coulson?" he asked.

"Everything in the world," the girl answered, holding her husband tightly by the arm.

"How's your book to-day?" Angus inquired.

"We're light on Arioso, sir," was the smiling reply.

"I'll have a fiver each way, then."

"You're on a fiver to nothing, sir," Coulson announced. "And it's the best bet I ever took in my life!"

(Next month: "Kenmar's Golden Day.")

A CASE OF 'FLU

By

G. R. MALLOCH

Illustrated by
STANLEY LLOYD

MR. THOMAS COBLEY was pacing to and fro in the room known at The Grange, Mountfield Road, as the study. The designation of this apartment was not perhaps altogether inappropriate, for within its walls Mr. Cobley did devote a considerable portion of his time to studying the daily papers and the art of literary composition. The fruits of his labour were contained in several handsomely-bound scrap-books which stood in a row on his writing table labelled with the names of well-known journals, amongst which the place of honour was given to one bearing in conspicuous gilt lettering the legend, "Contributions to *The Times* Newspaper."

Mr. Cobley was not inhuman; he had his share of vanity, and he was pleasantly aware of the fact that this volume, carelessly referred to in conversation, or in some tactful manner brought to the notice of his visitors, seldom failed to make a deep impression upon them. But having said this, we have said probably the worst that could be said of him, for otherwise he was a very admirable character, rather simple, very kind-hearted, and a champion of lost causes and down-trodden folk. He had ample leisure in which to develop such benevolent tendencies; and between cultivating them and cultivating his garden he had filled in his time very pleasantly since the death of an uncle, who left him twenty thousand pounds, had enabled him to retire from a minor office in the Civil Service. His domestic establishment was a modest one, and consisted of himself, a niece who kept house for him, and a daily general. He might well have lived on a more splendid scale, but charity made large demands on his kind heart and his collection of old silver was not made without sacrifices.

His mind at the moment was occupied by two conflicting problems: the problem of Mary Jane and the composition of a letter to *The Times* newspaper. Mr. Cobley's niece had left him that morning on a week's visit to other relatives, and that very afternoon Mary Jane had gone queer, as she put it; and Dr. Willis had diagnosed influenza and packed her off to her home. And Mr. Cobley was wondering whether he felt quite well himself, and how he was to get his evening meal, and at the same time make up his letter on the subject of the proper treatment of burglars. The effect was confusing, and that was why he had risen from his desk and taken to perambulating the room, an exercise which as a rule he found stimulating to mental activity. But it was not working out just as he expected. When he walked towards the window and saw the October sunset dying away in red and gold behind the villas opposite, his mind expanded and a philanthropic indignation found vent in resounding phrases such as, "I am fully persuaded," or, "I, for one, am convinced that not until we have fully explored every avenue of co-operative endeavour should we condemn these unfortunates to further severities."

But when he turned, as he must if he were not to walk out of the window, the sight of the door reminded him of the kitchen, the absence of Mary Jane, and the possibility of having to spend the week without domestic aid: for in his kindness of heart Mr. Cobley never once thought of spoiling his niece's holiday by recalling her.

Round again and back to the window, where a third problem kept intruding itself. Who was that man who was loafing about the road so furtively, and several times seemed to be looking at The Grange? Some poor fellow out of work, perhaps, and yet it was funny that he should have been about ever since Mary Jane left. But what nonsense—anyone had a right to walk in Mountfield Road. Was his head really

feeling a little dizzy? Was it possible that he was sickening for 'flu himself? Rubbish; it was all this walking up and down. Pulling himself together, Mr. Cobley sat down at his desk and began his letter to *The Times*.

Some citizen eminent enough to have his letters printed in full on the leader page had got up in a bad temper and found vent for it in a communication denouncing the lenience shown to criminals of all kinds, but especially burglars, in this degenerate age. He recalled the sterner times of our forefathers, when men were hanged for stealing, and asked whether in those days this epidemic of motor-car bandits could have taken place; he asked a number of equally sensible questions, and wound up by asserting that the safety and prosperity of our far-flung empire depended upon the application of the lash in all cases of theft. This letter had thrown kind-hearted Mr. Cobley into a perfect frenzy of humanitarian indignation, and he felt that it was essential that his reply should go by that evening's post. He knew well enough that his contribution to the controversy might not be printed, and that, if it did go in, it would be in that column of condensed letters in a less prominent part of the paper. Still, he would have done his duty, and he might be rewarded by seeing "From Mr. Thomas Cobley, The Grange, Mountfield Road, Tootstead," in large print, and have another cutting for his scrap-book.

He wrote rapidly in a neat Civil Service hand, expressing his disapproval of such a barbarous suggestion, working in his finest phrases and pleading for a humane and intelligent approach to the problem of crime and its prevention. But his mind was not working very clearly, and Mary Jane and the loafing man would keep intruding themselves. When he blotted the last page and rose to his feet, he felt distinctly queer. His head was aching: surely the room was very hot, yet why did he keep shivering? Yes, the room was too hot—he had better open the door rather than the window, in case he got a chill. He staggered a little as he crossed to the door, and then to the sofa, on which he lay down. He would be all right in a minute or two, no doubt. He stared at the fire and realized that the room was getting dark: draw the blinds in a minute: Mary Jane: the loafing man: his niece: exploring every avenue: I, for one——

SOME hours had passed before Mr. Cobley opened his eyes again. The room was pitch-dark, the fire had died out, and he was shivering violently. What could Mary Jane be thinking of—oh, dear, what a nuisance she was ill! Well, he must get up, though he felt strangely disinclined to move.

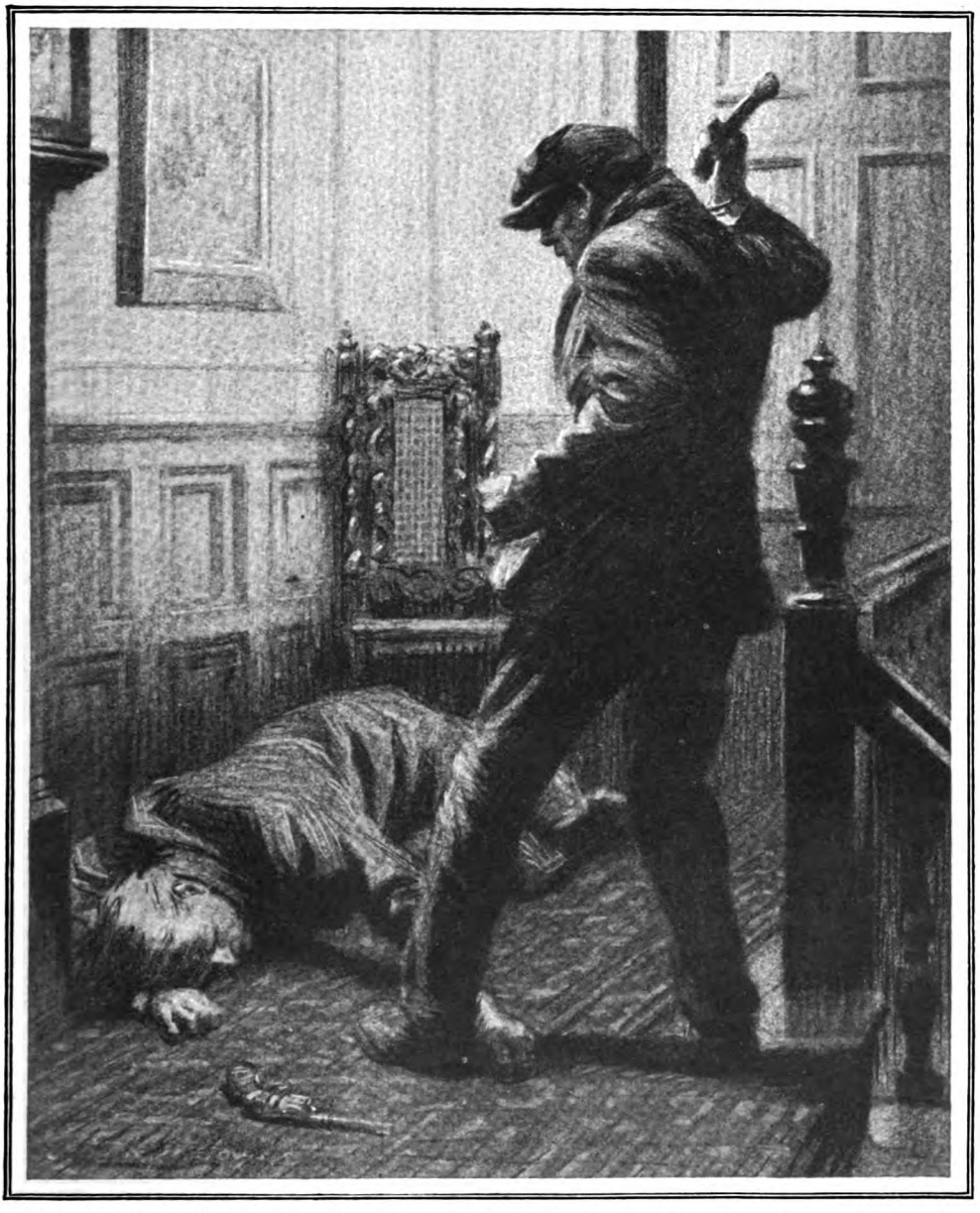
What was that?

A faint tinkling sound like falling glass in the hall below startled Mr. Cobley. Dead silence followed for a few moments, then a faint creaking. Someone was opening the front door; the hinges of the front door needed oiling; they creaked; he had spoken to Mary Jane about it only yesterday. The loafing man at once sprang into Mr. Cobley's somewhat confused mental vision. He was a burglar; he had seen two people leaving the house and no doubt imagined it to be empty. A burglar. Mr. Cobley sat up, suddenly alert. His collection of old silver jugs, of course! Where Mr. Cobley's treasure was there was his heart also.

He rose quietly and made for his desk, in the top drawer of which lay a revolver—a loaded revolver. Queer that the humanitarian, peace-loving Mr. Cobley should keep a loaded revolver. Stranger still that the law-abiding, conscientious Mr. Cobley should have practically every day for ten years exchanged compliments or discussed the weather with the local police sergeant without blenching, knowing that he had in his possession a firearm for which he had no permit or licence! Perhaps it was because he was so law-abiding and peace-loving that Mr. Cobley kept and almost cherished this weapon, which had come into his possession with the effects of a deceased relative; perhaps it was because he somehow always associated it with his collection of old silver. He certainly never thought of putting it into actual use; violence of any kind, even in defence of his dearest possessions, was against his most cherished principles. As for shooting anyone, he would have fainted at the mere idea of such a thing. Yet there it was, loaded in six chambers, and now being taken softly but firmly from its hiding-place.

Truth to tell, Mr. Cobley's principles had taken sudden flight; panic and rage had taken their place. A burglar after his silver, and perhaps after his life—Mr. Cobley gritted his teeth and, feeling strangely, almost pleasantly, excited, moved silently to the door and listened. Someone was coming up the stairs, very cautiously, in the dark. Mr. Cobley moved as silently and cautiously on to the landing. He could hear the other breathing; should he shoot in the dark, or switch on a light? He decided on the light, but as he moved towards the switch he kicked a chair. The figure on the stair stopped, then made a quick movement which put him on the landing beside Mr. Cobley. Mr. Cobley switched on the light and took aim.

The flood of light revealed a picture which



Mr. Cobley collapsed in a heap against the wall, the revolver clattering to the floor.

neither Mr. Cobley nor the loafing man, for it was he, could see in its entirety. It was a striking scene : a dangerous-looking man wearing a cap pulled down to a black mask stood with arm upraised about to fell Mr. Cobley with a life-preserver ; Mr. Cobley had him covered with a revolver and was about to shoot him ; it seemed obvious that the one who was not very quick would soon be dead. But that was not how it looked to Mr. Cobley or the burglar ; the latter saw very little but the muzzle of a revolver, and Mr. Cobley saw very little but the life-preserver.

But the blow never fell and the bullet never sped. What happened was that Mr. Cobley's flushed face suddenly went grey and crumpled, his body swayed, and he collapsed in a heap against the wall, the revolver clattering to the floor.

The burglar slowly dropped his arm.

"Lumme," he said in astonishment. He continued to stare at the prostrate figure of Mr. Cobley for some time; he shuffled his feet uneasily. At last he spoke.

"'Ere!" he said, huskily, "what's the game?"

But Mr. Cobley made no reply; Mr. Cobley had fainted. The burglar scratched his head. Then he bent over Mr. Cobley.

"'E's ill, lumme, 'e's ill," said the burglar. "'Ere, guv'nor, ain't you well?"

There was no response. The burglar touched one of Mr. Cobley's hands; it was cold and clammy.

"'Strewth!" he exclaimed, in a tone of concern, "'e's fainted, that's wot it is, 'e's fainted. 'Eart! Shouldn't wonder. 'E's fainted, that's wot 'e's done, fainted! Pore old bloke!

"Better 'op it," thought the burglar to himself: "if 'e croaks, they'll nab me for murder." But somehow he couldn't 'op it. It was obvious that Mr. Cobley was alive; he looked a kind-hearted old bloke, and his crumpled figure was strangely like the figure of a bloke the burglar had carried back into the trenches once. He knelt down beside Mr. Cobley.

"'Ere, mate, stir yourself; you've gone and fainted." Mr. Cobley opened his eyes and groaned faintly. "Fainted, that's wot you've done, guv'nor. Weak 'eart, and the surprise like of seein' me come up the stair. Got any brandy about?"

Mr. Cobley pointed feebly to the study door. The other got up, and moving cautiously, as if in an enemy's country, entered the room. His first act was to pull down the blinds; then he switched the lights on and saw the decanters in a glass-doored cupboard. In a minute he was kneeling beside Mr. Cobley, pouring brandy between his lips. Mr. Cobley blinked, spluttered, and sat up.

"What happened?" he said. "I was going to shoot you."

"Well, guv'nor, I don't mind telling you as how I was going to 'it you. You fainted, see? 'Eart attack. 'Oo else is in the 'ouse?"

"Nobody," said Mr. Cobley. "I'm alone to-night."

"Is that right, guv'nor?"

"Yes," said Mr. Cobley. "I feel very ill—please don't leave me for a little."

"Don't you think it, guv'nor, not when you're queer. 'Ere, in your bed you ought to be. Fainted you did, all of a sudden."

"Perhaps you would be kind enough to help me to my bedroom?" said Mr. Cobley. "It's this door opposite. Would you put on the light first?"

"Wait till I get the blinds down fust, guv'nor, not bein' over-anxious to be seen." And having made all safe, the man in the mask returned, swung Mr. Cobley to his feet, and got him into his bed. Mr. Cobley was very glad to get there; he had a splitting headache and the room kept going round. The burglar removed his shoes and outer clothing and tucked him in; then stood watching him uncomfortably. Mr. Cobley felt himself going off again; when he came round brandy was again being forced into his mouth.

"That's better, mate," said a rough voice in tones of relief. "Fainted, you did—fainted. Subjec' to 'eart attacks, are you?"

"No," said Mr. Cobley. "I'm ill—I think I've got influenza."

"'Strewth!" said his nurse. "'Ere, let me feel your pulse. 'Strewth, it ain't 'alf racin'! Doctor's wot you want; that's it, guv'nor, you want a doctor, strite, you do!"

"Perhaps you would be kind enough to telephone for Dr. Willis—Tootstead two is his number. Say it's Mr. Cobley—very ill."

"Can't be done, guv'nor. Wire's cut—'ave to take precautions, y'see."

"It was the silver you were after?"

"Yus."

"I believe you saved my life with that brandy. But I'm very ill."

"Saved yer life?"

"I think so—my heart seemed to stop."

"Guv'nor, you lie still, see, and I'll get old Willis—I knows 'is 'ouse," said the burglar. "Full of burglar alarms," he added, bitterly.

DR. WILLIS had been out on a late call and hadn't gone to bed. He cursed heartily when he heard his night bell go, but doctors are martyrs, and he went to the door at once. He started back in momentary alarm at the sight of a man in a black mask.

"Old Mr. Cobley, sir, at The Grange, very bad—arsted me to call you at once."

"What have you done to him?" demanded Dr. Willis.

"Me, doctor? I ain't done nothin'—saved 'is life, 'e says I 'ave," was the indignant reply.

The doctor considered him for a moment.

"All right," he said, and, picking up his bag from a chair in the hall, came out. "You're coming back with me, you know. I want to see what you've been up to before I part with you."

"I ain't done nothin', doctor. I'll come with you all right."

"Come along then, Mr. Sikes."

"Besides, I left all my tools there," said Mr. Sikes.

When they reached the house, Dr.

Willis looked about him curiously for any signs of a struggle. He saw that the front door had been forced and on the landing he saw a life-preserver and a revolver lying on the floor. "Sikes has brought me here to save himself from being hanged," he thought; but the patient was his first concern, and he proceeded to an examination at once. To his surprise he found no external injury of any kind, and he was more surprised to find in Sikes a willing helper in undressing and getting Mr. Cobley comfortably in bed.

"Do you know Mr. Higgins, the chemist?" he asked. "I want you to go there and ring his night bell and get this prescription made up immediately. Bring it back as quickly as you can. And take that thing off your face before you go, if you don't want to be run in."

"Lumme, doctor, did I come down to your 'ouse wiv that on?" gasped Mr. Sikes. "All comes of 'is fainting like that. Where is this 'Iggings' place, sir?"

"The chemist whose safe you cracked last week," said the doctor, making a shrewd guess, and Mr. Sikes said:—

"Oh, 'im!" and went.

During his absence, Dr. Willis managed to extract some sort of rough account of what had happened from his patient. A perusal of the letter to *The Times* newspaper seemed to afford him vast amusement.

"I thought it was a pretty good letter," protested Mr. Cobley, feebly.

"Excellent, excellent," said Dr. Willis, with a grin. "I agree with every word of it. But, tell me, Cobley, what were you going to do with the revolver?"

Mr. Cobley stared at him.

"Kill him, I suppose," he said at last, doubtfully. "Some sort of atavistic instinct. I'm heartily ashamed of myself."

"You needn't be," said the doctor. "You'd have missed him, in any case. You human beings are very puzzling, though."

"Aren't you a human being, Willis?" asked the patient, with a flicker of a smile.

"No, I'm a doctor. Human beings are asleep in bed at this hour. I'm a Robot."

"You doctors certainly are a race apart," said Mr. Cobley, gratefully.

Mr. Sikes returned with a bottle, and ten minutes later a nurse, included in the

"Look here," said the doctor, "I want to get this thing straight. You could have got away with Mr. Cobley's silver—why didn't you?"

prescription to Mr. Higgins, arrived and took charge.

While she was making her arrangements Mr. Cobley made a sign to the two men to come nearer.

"I should like to know the name and address of my visitor," he said, feebly. "He has been very kind——"

"His name is Sikes, and his address will sooner or later be Pentonville Jail," said the doctor. "Don't worry about him."

"That's right, sir," said Mr. Sikes. "I don't want no bloomin' publicity—wot I done was nothink."

"Well, then," persisted Mr. Cobley, "some little reward. I've very little money in the house—take a piece of my silver."

Mr. Sikes shook his head.

"Why not?" asked the doctor.

But Mr. Sikes was firm. "I ain't a-goin' to rob 'im," he said.

Satisfied that Mr. Cobley was in good hands, Dr. Willis signed to Mr. Sikes to follow him. On the landing Mr. Sikes paused and looked about him anxiously.

"I've got the life-preserver and the revolver, if that's what you're looking for," said the doctor. "I'll find them handy if you ever pay me a visit."

Mr. Sikes sighed regretfully. In the hall he picked up certain tools and concealed them about his person.

"Come down to my surgery," commanded Dr. Willis, and Mr. Sikes obeyed and watched in fascinated silence while the doctor mixed a dose and gave it to him.

"Drink that—you've been in contact with a very severe case of influenza," said Dr. Willis. Mr. Sikes drank it obediently, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and expressed his thanks.

The doctor sat down at his table; Mr. Sikes shuffled his feet uneasily and looked towards the door.

"Wait a minute, Bill Sikes," said the doctor. "Look here, I want to get this thing straight. You could have got away with Mr. Cobley's silver—why didn't you?"

"Well, guv'nor, the pore old bloke was ill—real bad."

"I see. But look here—supposing he had not fainted, and had fired at you and missed, as he certainly would have done, and you had struck him down with that life-preserver, you would have cleared out with everything?"

"That's right, doc. But look 'ere, sir—was it right wot 'e said about my savin' 'is life?"

"Yes, I think we may say so. His heart is weak—he had a sudden and very severe attack of influenza—the chances are he would never have come out of that first fainting fit if somebody hadn't given him brandy."

"Well, then, guv'nor," said Mr. Sikes, his face red with indignation, "wot do you take me for? Me save a man's life an' then go and rob 'im? Wot do you take me for?"

"Not a bad sort of chap," said the doctor. "But what was the life-preserver for?"

"To lay 'im out."

"And he was going to shoot you—you realize that?"

"Game old cock," said Mr. Sikes.

A DAY or two later Dr. Willis was talking to a convalescent Mr. Cobley.

"Tell me, Cobley," he said, "how you square your humanitarian theories with the fact that our friend Mr. Sikes would cheerfully have laid you out if you had fired and missed him?"

"My dear old friend," said Mr. Cobley, with a twinkle, "I have lived too long to be such a fool as to attempt to square any sort of theory with life as it is."

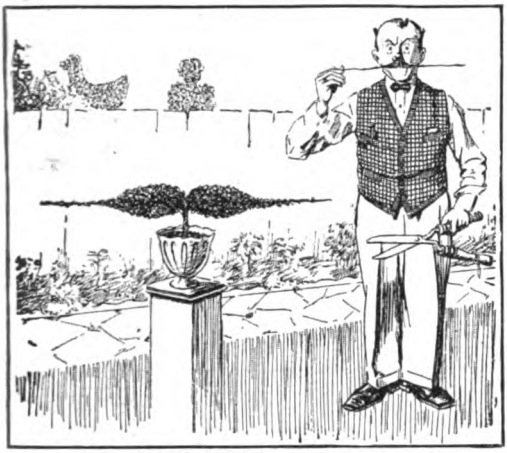
"And you still think——"

Mr. Cobley stopped him with a gesture and took up a copy of *The Times*.

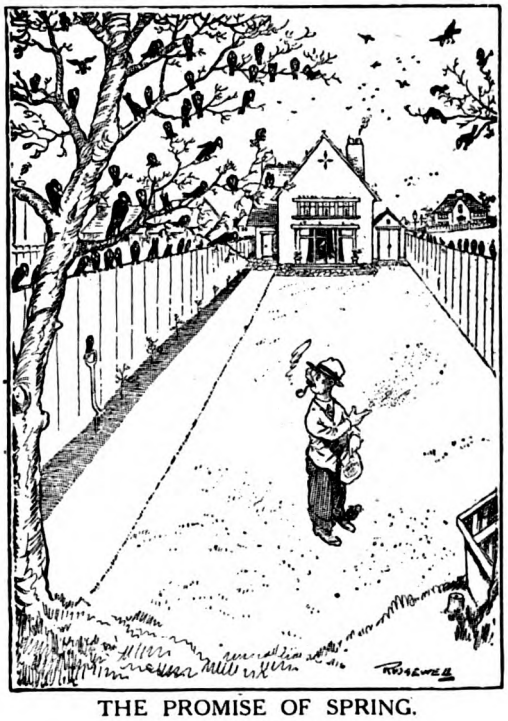
"What I think, Willis," he said, "is pretty well expressed in to-day's *Times*." And he read from the paper: "I, for one, am convinced that not until we have fully explored every avenue of co-operative endeavour should we condemn these unfortunates to further severities. . . ."

On his way home Dr. Willis thought to himself, "It's almost worth while being a doctor to be able to watch their antics."

HUMOURS OF GARDENING



BEAUTIFYING THE GARDEN.
An ex-Sergeant-Major shows his skill as a topiary artist.
By permission of "London Opinion."



THE PROMISE OF SPRING.
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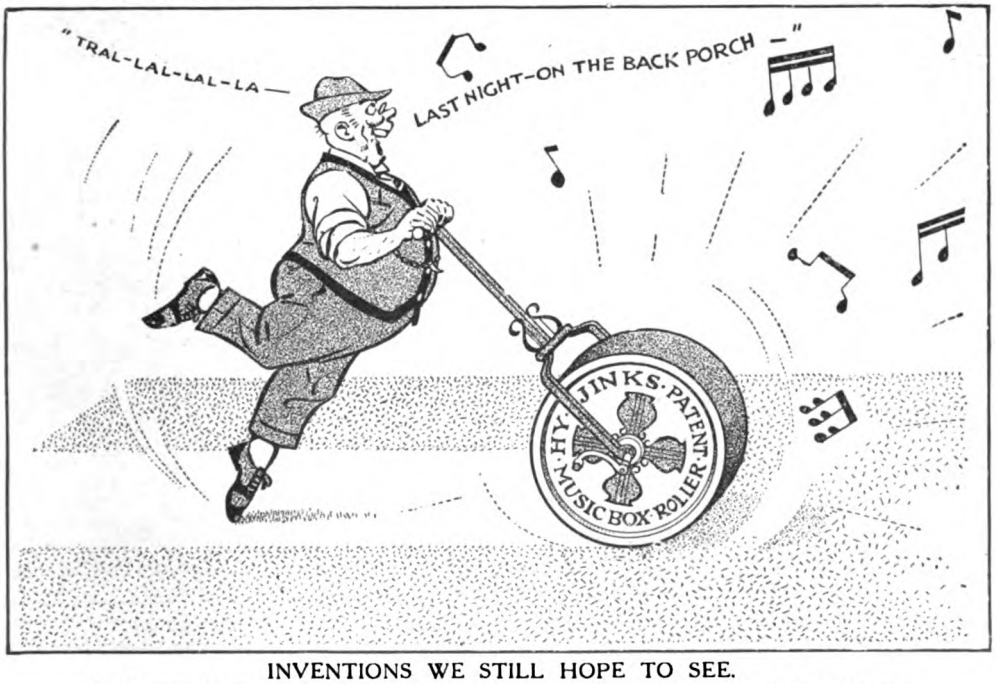
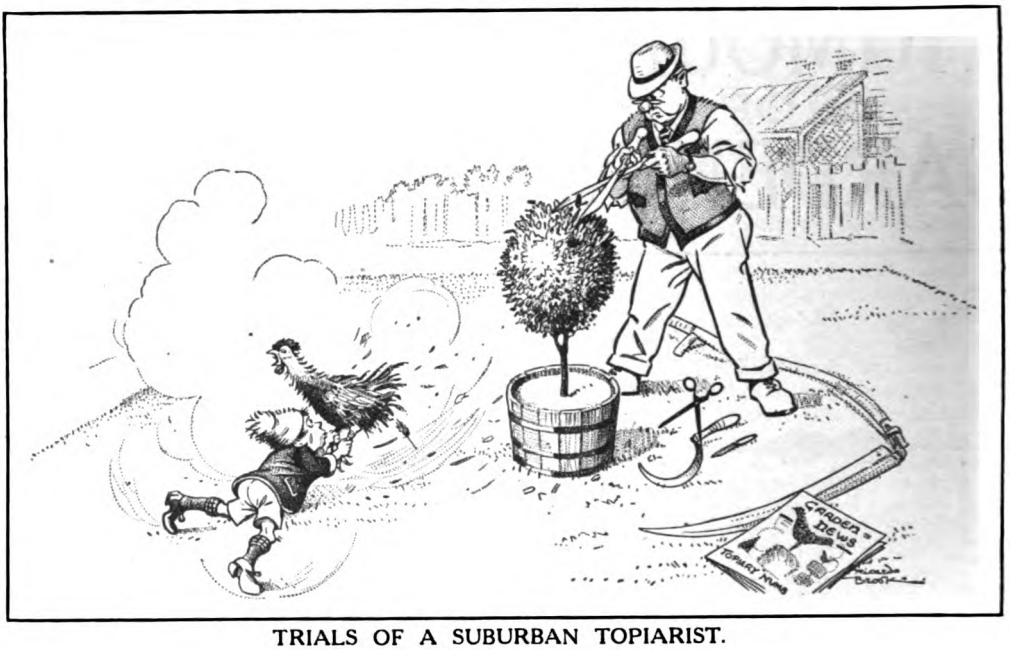


INVENTIONS WE STILL HOPE TO SEE.
Roll your Lawn to Music. The Music-Box Lawn-Roller makes joyful gardeners.
By permission of "The Humorist."



TRIALS OF A SUBURBAN TOPIARIST.
The Unwilling Model.

By permission of "The Humorist."

Tea-shop Habitué (putting down the last stone of his garden path): "Domino!"

By permission of "The Humorist."

Mother: "What are you doing?"
Child: "Gardening, Mummy."
Mother: "But that isn't gardening."
Child: "Well, that's how Daddy does it."

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

VERY WET DAY.

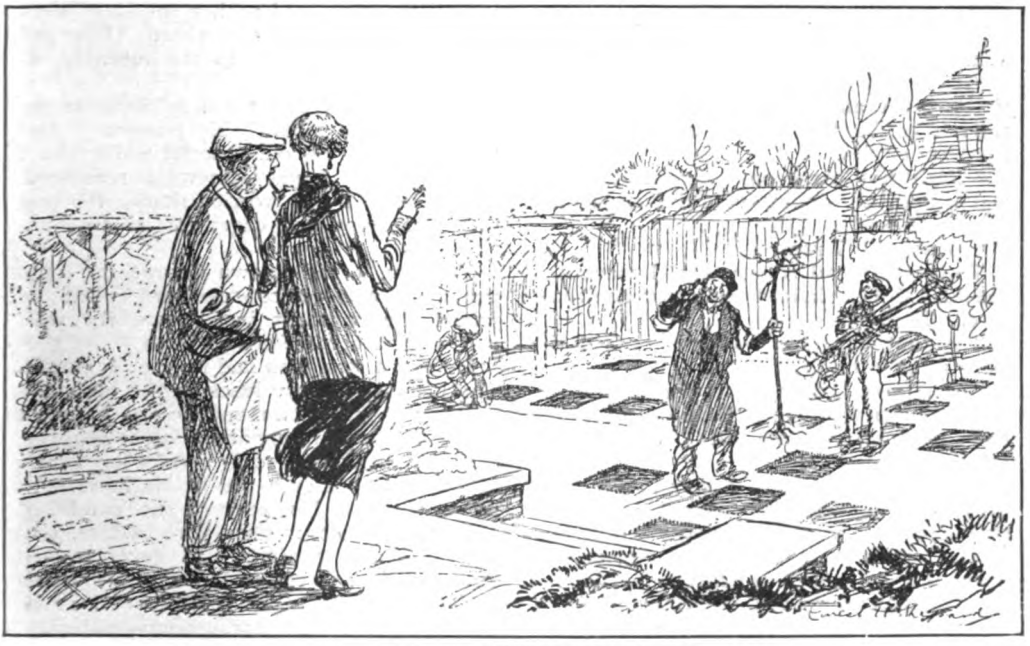
Carrier: "Where will you 'ave the sundial put, sir?"

By permission of "The Humorist."

Lady (to her gardener's son): "I suppose you help your father with his own garden?"

Boy: "Oh, no, mum. Father's very perticlar; 'e wouldn't let me touch it."

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."



THE RULING PASSION.

William (laying-out the new rose-garden): "Will ye 'ave standards across or down, sir?"

By permission of the Proprietors of "Punch."

The Highest Bidder

By

GARSTIN BEGBIE

Illustrated by
BALLIOL SALMON

I.

HAVING had my fitting I was just settling my tie preparatory to sallying forth when I heard two people enter the next cubicle.

" I think you will find this a perfect fit, sir," Andrews, the head cutter, said. " And all that is left to be done is the final trimmings, as you might say. Will you have three or four buttons on the cuff, sir ? "

" Good heavens, *I* don't know," said a voice wearily. " *I* haven't the faintest notion what the dictates of fashion are now. What do you advise, Andrews ? "

" If I may say so, I should have four, sir, without any hesitation. Four is considered to be the correct number in the smartest circles."

" Right-ho—carry on," agreed the tired voice, and all doubt vanished from my mind.

" George ! " I roared.

There was dead silence, and I visualized the look of scandalized horror on Andrews' face. Then——

" Is that you, Toby John ? " asked the tired voice in brighter tones.

" Who else, indeed ? " I retorted.

" Then for the love of Mike come in here and pronounce judgment," begged the voice.

In two seconds I was staring in amaze at my friend George Synnistyrre. He was struggling into a tail-coat, and when he had finished, with the aid of a deft tug or two from the attendant Andrews, he looked smarter than ever I had seen him.

Glancing round, my roving eyes took in a morning suit, a dinner-jacket suit, and three lounge suits, and all this was so foreign to the George I knew that I felt compelled to make inquiries.

" Why all this, George ? " I asked.

" 'Tis a sad story, Toby John," he answered, and the look of distaste on his face was ludicrous. It also made the puzzle more abstruse.

" But why ? " I reiterated, stupidly.

" I told you it was a sad story," he said. " It is also a long story. I suggest, therefore, that you ask me to lunch with you, and over the gins-and-bitters, for which you will pay, I will enlighten you."

" Right," I agreed with a smile. " Meet me at my club at one sharp. I've got several things I must do this morning, so I'll slip along now."

" What is left of me will be there on the stroke of the hour," he grinned. And because it was his old cheerful smile that I knew so well, I was somewhat reassured. Nevertheless I was worried during the rest of the morning and eager for an explanation.

You see, I had known George for some years. I was senior subaltern when he joined the regiment just before the war, and we had become good friends.

He was a man who had no use for shams. The life that society leads in the big cities literally appalled him, and he was happiest when he was pottering about in the country, clad in disgraceful old tweeds or riding kit, with a gun or a rod in his hand or a horse between his knees. The combined influence of his mother, two sisters, and several female relatives had never proved strong enough to coerce him into " dressing decently," as they put it, and yet here he was laying in a regular trousseau, apparently. Trousseau ! By Gad ! Perhaps *that* was it. Perhaps poor old George was snared at last. If so, I only hoped she was good enough for him, and I doubted it.

II.

"WELL, George, what is the meaning of this morning's feverish sartorial activity?" I asked lightly as we sipped our drinks.

"I like that," answered George. "Feverish is a good word—it's *the* word. Talk about democracy — that fellow Andrews is a blinkin' slave-driver. Why, bless my soul, one of those suits was absolutely perfect, but he swore the back was all wrong, ripped out the stitches, and ordered me—positively commanded me—to appear to-morrow for another blessed fitting."

There was a pause, in which I was presumably meant to condole with him.

"Nice sympathetic kind of blighter *you* are," he snorted, after a long silence. "Never mind, I like your club, and I like the gins-and-bitters even better. Yes, you can take that last as a hint."

"I couldn't very well take it as anything else," I grinned, ruefully. "Go on with the yarn."

"Well, as you know, the attractions of the cities have always left me remarkably cold. Give me the country every time. But times change, Toby John. *Tempora mutantur!* That is the only quotation I carried away from school with me, and therefore I'm justly proud of it. Always work it in when possible.

"You have got a pretty good idea of our ancestral hall and the surrounding landscape, haven't you? Exactly. Well, to cut a long story short, old chap, the whole boiling outfit is in imminent peril of going up the spout. Hence the glad rags."

"I'm afraid I don't understand," I said, dazedly. The information that Laresby and its broad acres was likely to be lost I could hardly credit. I had always thought that the Earl of Larrock was very comfortably off, not to mention rich. And what *had* the clothes to do with it, anyway?

"Yes, I suppose it does come as rather a shock to you," said George. "'S a matter of fact it gave *me* quite a decided jolt. You see, the dear old guv'nor has been rather unlucky. He is the straightest man I've ever known. But most men have an expensive hobby of some sort. Sometimes it's racin', or yachtin', or pretty women, or wine. In the dad's case it is the Stock Exchange. Poor old chap, he's never touched cards, but he can't resist a gamble, apparently. He told me the whole story the other day. He has been gambling with investments for years, it seems, unbeknown to any of us. And you know what it is. Dear old chap, he is so honest that he was bound to lose. What easy game he must have been for some swine! But it must have been about on a par with shooting over water. Too low for any decent man. Well, sometimes he won in a small way, and that spurred him on. But in the big things he lost. It is the old, old story. And now the position is this—the whole show is mortgaged up to the hilt, lock, stock, and barrel. Of course, we aren't absolutely broke, you understand. I've got a few hundreds a year of my own and my mother has got her own private income. There is no question of starving. But nobody knows except myself. The girls could stand the change all right, but the shock might kill the mater. That is what I'm afraid of. She is so used to the place, you see. And, of course, both she and the guv'nor have always looked forward to hearing the patter of small feet round the place and all that sort of slush, don't you know. And there you are. It's up to me to pull the show together, as I look at it. Hence the comic pantomime this morning. I am going to enter myself for the matrimonial stakes, my boy. Positively throw myself on the market to be knocked down to the highest bidder."

For many minutes I sat in shocked silence. This catastrophe was stunning. I could hardly realize it. At last——

"And the highest bidder will most probably want to show her purchase off in town during the greater part of the year," I said. "After all, if one spends a large sum on buying a title, one would, being of that type, wish to show it off in London, Paris, New York, and all the other centres of demoralization."

"That had struck me," said George, simply.

It was of course typical of him. The fact that what he conceived to be his duty would make his life a veritable hell did not for a moment deter him.

"Well, there is one good thing about it," I said, striving to find a rift in the clouds; "it is lucky you are not attracted elsewhere."

George's mouth grew rigid and I saw his hands clench.

"Yes," he said, grimly, "very lucky indeed, isn't it?" And I knew that he lied; that he was already in love. But what could I do or say except respect his obvious wish for it not to be known?

Actually I said: "Let's have some lunch," and my grip of his shoulder told him, I know, how I felt for him.

III.

THE days fled by in rapid succession and everywhere I went I encountered George Synnistyrre. At the opera, in the theatres, at night clubs and in restaurants, at races and in the *salons* of Mayfair

one came across him. And always he preserved the same high courage.

In his whimsical way he would give me bulletins of his progress.

"I fancy we are making decided headway with the dainty little morsel over yonder," he would say, nodding in the direction of a corpulent South African Jewess whose wealth, if judged by her display of bad taste in the matter of jewellery, must be enormous. Or, "I believe the fair American is going to have a stab at me, Toby John. Hold my hand—I'm nervous."

He spoke lightly and kept up a marvellous running fire of amusing foolishness, but at times his mouth grew grim and there was a pained far-away look in his eyes.

So things went on and George Synnistyrre grew increasingly worried, for settling day was approaching remorselessly, and it looked as if he would have to sell himself to the Hebrew lady.

"Two more weeks of freedom, Toby John!" he said to me one evening as we were waiting for our party in the *foyer* of the Berkeley.

And just then in came the loveliest girl I have ever seen. She wasn't pretty—she was far above mere prettiness. Hers was the loveliness that is made up of beautiful symmetry of form, freshness of colouring, delicacy of features, and above all a haunting beauty of expression. It was a loveliness that seems but to increase and grow more intensified with the years, and I bowed before it as a sapling bows before a storm.

But a casual glance at my companion shattered all thoughts of myself. He was staring at her intently, and never had I seen his mouth set in sterner lines.

The vision came up to us and spoke to him.

"Fancy meeting *you* here, Lord Synnistyrre," she said, and I had time to note that her voice was as perfect as I could have wished it. "But then you have become quite a carpet knight, according to rumour?"

Her voice was sweet, but her words had a nasty lash to them. The way she emphasized the "carpet" made her meaning unmistakable.

"Rumour is a lying jade, I have heard, Miss Latimer," said George, with his old quizzical smile in his eyes. "But in this instance she certainly speaks the truth. You see, I've flung myself on the market, and there are so many snobs about I am quite hoping to get off."

The lady looked puzzled.

"What market?" she asked at length.

"Why, the matrimonial one," laughed George. "You know—highest bidder wins an' all that sort of thing. At present my position might be described as approximately 'going—for the second time.'"

"I see," she said, slowly and with veiled eyes. "Is it an open market? I mean, can anyone bid?"

"Oh! Certainly," said George, a trifle uneasily, I thought.

"Then," said Miss Latimer, searching in her small bag, "I should like to bid. Ah, here it is. I bid one penny!" And she held the coin forth.

I did not dare look at George. Instead, I stared fixedly at her proudly upflung head and scornful eyes. She meant to hurt, and she knew how to apply the whip.

"I should very much like to accept that," came quietly from George. "But, unfortunately, someone has already offered twopence."

"Oh, well, I am afraid I can't go any higher," said my lady. "One has to overpay sometimes, but there *is* a limit to extravagance."

"Quite," agreed George, composedly. "I thought your original offer was very generous—considering that the only things I've got to sell don't interest you."

For a long moment they looked each other straightly in the eyes, and to me, at any rate, it was quite obvious that they loved each other madly. George, I know, did not think she cared a button. But the look in his eyes spoke plainly to her, though he never guessed it. Somewhat uncertainly she turned away.

"Ah, there is my partner," she said, suddenly catching sight of a man who had just entered. "You will excuse me, won't you?"

I saw that she was anxious to get away, so that I was surprised when George laid a restraining hand on her arm.

"Please don't think me impertinent," he said, "but do you know anything about that man? He is not fit company for you."

She flared up.

"What exactly do you mean?" she snapped.

"Just this—he's a cur," said George, grimly. "He has taken advantage of my father's childlike honesty and simplicity, and that is why I'm putting myself up for auction. Although he was my father's guest many times, he encouraged him to gamble, and even went so far as to advise him what to invest in. And all those investments went phut! Finally, he loaned the guv'nor money to pursue his folly, at Lord knows how many hundred per cent. interest, on the very excellent security of Laresby. I don't say the man is actually a criminal, mind you, but it *is* a most significant and even sinister point that all his advice was so utterly worthless and his terms for the loans were undoubtedly as harsh as they could be. To my mind he

"Then," said Miss Latimer, "I should like to bid. I bid one penny!" And she held the coin forth.

broke the first rule of hospitality. I consider the fellow to be treacherous, and as such no fit escort for you."

He bowed and moved away.

I was just going to follow when the girl caught my arm.

"Wait a minute, please!" she said, urgently. "Is he your friend? Yes? Then will you take this and come to see me to-morrow afternoon?"

She drew a visiting-card from her bag and handed it to me. As I stood wavering, "It is for his sake—as well as for mine," she urged.

"Very well," I agreed.

IV.

AT half-past four precisely on the following day I was shown into a charming drawing-room, and as my hostess rose to greet me I felt that her happiness must come even before that of George. Such traitors women can make of men.

Tea passed to the accompaniment of casual small talk, but when we had finished my hostess began her attack.

"Major Foley," she commenced, "I have heard a good deal about you from George, and I know you are his friend."

"That is so," I agreed.

"Then will you help me to secure his happiness?" she asked.

"I don't see how you can do that," I ventured.

"Let me explain," she said. "I met George some time ago out hunting. I liked him. And the more I saw of him the more my liking for him increased. Then, quite suddenly, I heard from various sources that he was fooling round the fashionable drawing-rooms. Not only was that entirely foreign to his nature as I had conceived it, but it was also degrading. Still, that would not have roused me to the pitch of rudeness that it did had I not believed that he was fond of me. Of course, I realize now that he wasn't, but I certainly gathered from his manner that he was."

"Excuse my interrupting you, Miss Latimer," I broke in, "but I cannot sit here and listen to you suggesting that George is a rotter. Because he is one of the whitest men I know. I grant you that he is chucking himself away for money, but that is only for his parents' sake. That is surely a big enough sacrifice in itself. Yet, in addition to that, he is deliberately cutting himself off from the girl he loves!"

"Who is that?" she asked, tensely.

"Isn't it quite obvious?" I parried. "It is you, of course."

"My God!" she whispered, and turned away from me so that I could not see her face. It was only her convulsively working hands that gave me a clue to her thoughts and satisfied me. Nevertheless I determined to be quite sure.

"And you love him?" I pressed her.

She swung round again and looked me straight in the eyes.

"More than anything else in the world," she stated, simply. "That is why his behaviour hurt so."

"But now you understand," I said.

"Yes, now I understand," she agreed, gently. "But *you* don't!"

"How do you mean?" I asked, puzzled.

"*You* don't know the hell I am going through," she cried. "That man he pointed out to me as being the one who is buying up Laresby is *my agent!* You see, I am ridiculously rich. And I've no head for business. Mr. Carter manages all my affairs for me. He is a sort of steward, and every year he just tells me how much money he has made for me, and I have never inquired how it was made. Acting on his own initiative he has issued loans on Laresby. And George doesn't know. He thinks I am just comfortably off, I suppose. And why not? After all one doesn't go about shouting that one is a millionairess, does one? Indeed, as a matter of fact I took some pains to conceal it, for I wanted him to propose to me, and I had a shrewd suspicion that his pride would never let him if he knew my real position. Now, you see, *I* am responsible for the ruin of the only man I love in the world."

I just sat and stared at her and thought dumbly how cruel Fate could be.

"Of course," said the girl, breaking in upon my reverie, "he must have the estates back."

"You can't just give 'em back casually like that," I demurred. "He won't take 'em. Dash it, no self-respecting man would."

"Then what on earth can I do?" she asked, imploringly. "I *won't* go on with this."

"It is essentially a case for tact," I said, trying hard to think.

"Then, Major Foley, for Heaven's sake be tactful," she said.

"My friends," I told her, "call me Toby John."

"*Please*, Toby John," she said obediently, and added, "Dear."

My subjugation was complete.

"I have a plan," I announced proudly.

"Tell me," she begged.

"You must complete the purchase," I declared.

She stared at me in amaze.

"Complete the purchase?" she ejaculated at last in amazement. "But why? How can *that* help?"

" Don't you see ? " I queried.

" No."

" You really love him ? "

" Can you doubt it ? "

" Well, then," I explained, " you simply *must* complete the purchase. Then I suggest that you offer him that penny again. Once the place is definitely sold the marriage market will hold out no more inducements to George. And if he takes it you can make him a present of the title deeds. How about that ? "

For answer my hostess crossed to my side and kissed me.

" You *are* a dear," she said, and her eyes were shining.

As for me, well, I believe mine were, too.

" Can you arrange it ? " she went on.

" If I could accompany you down to Laresby I think I could," I told her.

She rang the bell. To the maid who answered she gave one crisp order.

" Order the car *at once*, please," she said.

V.

GEORGE still had a week's grace when, feeling very conspiratorial, I rang him up.

" Well, George ? " I began indefinitely.

" Burr ! " answered George.

" Dine with me to-night ? " I asked.

" Can't," he replied. " To-night is all earmarked for my proposal to Rebecca. Yes, I'm all ginned up and primed for my part. *Don't* we have fun ! "

" I'm sorry," I insisted, gravely, " but you must put it off."

" Positively can't be done," from George.

" George, I'm up a gum tree," I lied. I knew the appeal for succour would fetch him.

" Oh, right-ho, old chap," he acquiesced ; " where and what time ? "

I told him and rang off, not trusting myself any farther.

VI.

WHEN I met George his face was a picture. His expression was a quaint mixture of sorrow and irrepressible delight.

" What is the matter ? " I asked.

" Done finish," he jerked at me. " The place is sold. Heard from the guv'nor this afternoon."

Silently we shook hands. A moment later my other guest arrived.

" You *do* know each other, don't you ? " I murmured, foolishly.

Gravely they shook hands. Then——

" Are you still in the market ? " asked my lady.

" Er—no," said George ; " no, I'm not."

" That is a pity," she said, clearly, ' because I wanted to offer you that penny again."

Much the same words, mark you, but what a difference of tone ! No offence implied this time.

" Do you mean that ? " asked George, stretching out his hand, and it was trembling feverishly.

" Certainly," she answered, composedly.

" The bid is accepted," said George.

It was then that I suddenly found I had made a fool of myself and should have been keeping another engagement.

VII.

BUT I had the pleasure of being their best man at a registrar's office a few days later, and of seeing George's face when his bride gave him her wedding present after the ceremony.

" You see, my man," she said, and her eyes held the greatest beauty in the world, " you fell, after all, to the highest bidder."

And then, to relieve their feelings, they both rounded on me.

AUTHOR, POET, and ARTIST at Thirteen

Greta Hunt, age 13.

INTRODUCTION BY MRS. WINSTON CHURCHILL.

Once upon a time my little girl used to tell me about a delightful school friend. She was Greta Hunt. She used to amuse and charm her companions by telling them fairy stories of her own invention. She seemed to live in a world of fancy which she peopled with imaginary inhabitants—both mortals and fairies. These became at last so real to her that she actually believed that they truly existed. Every day she would tell her relations and her friends new and thrilling tales of the doings of these phantom creatures. You can imagine that this small romancer was a delightful companion for her young friends. And not only could she invent tales, sad, wise, moral, or funny, but she could also paint pictures full of charm and imagination. One of them, I think, has the depth of colour of old church glass, and the detail in another could be examined through a magnifying glass. Greta is now thirteen, and last year at an Exhibition at the Guildhall she won a bronze star for drawing and painting.

I hope that the following examples of her stories, her rhymes, and her pictures may charm other parents and their children as much as they have me and mine.

Clementine S. Churchill

THE SELLER OF DREAMS.

"DREAMS to sell, Dreams to sell."
An echoing voice and a tinkling bell
Broke the silence of the Dell.
"Dreams to sell, Dreams to sell."
Then from out of a Hollow Tree
A seller of Dreams came forth to see
His customers. "Come, buy," cried he;
"Here is a dream, well earned, by thee."
So this book that I have made
Came from distant fairyland
Full of Dreams—not what life seems—
So that you can understand
The ways and whims of fairy things
In that magic Wonderland,
Which he gave me leave to tell.
"Dreams to sell, Dreams to sell."

MARY had been reading a book about the Sandman, who, as everyone knows, puts people to sleep, and she was wondering what he was like and how she would like to see him and speak to him—when she was startled by a crash down the road.

The crash was followed by piercing cries of pain, so she rushed out to see what was the matter.

There in the middle of the road she saw a poor little girl who had been knocked down by a motor-car and who was holding her ankle and trying hard not to cry.

Mary was full of sympathy because she knew that the little girl's parents were ever so poor, for her father was a cripple and so could not get any work.

Mary, however, was not much richer herself, yet she felt she wanted to help—especially when the next day the village gossips told her the poor little girl had not been able to get a wink of sleep for the pain.

"I wonder what I can do?" she said, and just then her eyes fell upon her book.

"Oh—if only I could meet the Sandman," she exclaimed. "he could help her to sleep."

"I'll go out into the woods," thought she. "The gnomes and fairies live there."

So off she ran, on and on across the fields, through hedges and over stiles, murmuring all the while, "Sandman—Sandman, quick, you are wanted."

But though she listened for an answer to her cry, she could only hear the echo, going away in the distance, "Sandman—Sandman," till it seemed as if some fairy was carrying her message.

All day long she wandered, listened, and looked, till her voice and then her feet grew tired.

Still, on and on she went, through the shady woods, which to her surprise got more and more beautiful, the flowers, too, becoming lovelier, the birds' songs softer, and the moss like a big velvet carpet.

It would have been delightful to go to sleep—everything seemed to invite her—but Mary continued steadily on, her eyes half closing of their own accord, she was so tired, and her lips whispering, "Sandman, dear"

Then at last, in spite of herself, she could keep awake no longer, and with a little sob of exhaustion she fell down—asleep.

No sooner had she closed her eyes in sleep, however, than there stood before her a queer old man, surrounded by little children, some rich, some poor, some tall, some small and thin, with clothes ragged and torn; but he seemed to love them all very dearly and they seemed to love him.

His hair was white and long, and on his head he wore a pointed hat, while on his back he carried a huge sack.

Such a queer sight he was, and as he drew nearer Mary heard him croon:—

"Dreams to sell, Dreams to sell.
If you would buy some
Work for them well.
Dreams for rich and Dreams for poor.
Bad Dreams, Sad Dreams,
And many more.
Dreams to sell, Dreams to sell."

"What a strange man," said Mary to herself, "and what strange things to sell," and she lay quite still and watched.

Then she saw the little children go up to him one by one, and out of his sack he drew balloons like she had often seen at the seaside and at garden parties given to the children.

And as he gave the balloons away he sang:—

"You who are good and work all day,
And never have much time to play,
See what your reward shall be—
Dreams, sweet dreams, designed by me."

Then he would give each child a balloon, and the children were glad and ran happily home, carrying their treasures with them.

"I wonder who he is?" thought Mary to herself, "this funny old man"—but she did not like to ask him, because it was really none of her business.

When, however, the old man turned to where Mary was standing, and looked straight into her eyes, she could not help saying, timidly:—

"If you please, sir—what are you doing?"

Then he answered: "I am giving away prizes for good deeds—sweet dreams for those who have worked hard, bad dreams for those who have been wicked, jolly dreams for those who have made people happy around them," and he crooned away:—

"*Dreams to sell, Dreams to sell,*"

repeating what he had said before.

Mary felt in her pocket to see if she had a penny, but there was nothing there, and she said:—

"I am sorry, but I have no money, and I was so anxious to buy one for a sick friend"—for she was still thinking of the little poor girl who had been run over and could not sleep because of the pain in her foot.

At this the old man smiled ever so sweetly, and replied:—

"Money cannot buy dreams, my dear. We all get the dreams that we deserve—I see to that—and little children who have no toys to play with all day have ever so many beautiful ones in dreamland, and lonely mites with no friends find ever so many in the land of dreams, and those who work all day dance all night in Fairyland."

"If you please, sir," said Mary, "what are you doing?"

And would you believe it, just as Mary was about to say, "Why, you must be the Sandman," she woke up.

"My darling," said her mother, looking sweetly into her face, "why on earth did you go into the forest alone? Do you know, one of the gamekeepers found you fast asleep on a bank of moss, dead tired, and carried you all the way home here, without you waking up once."

Then Mary told her mother all about how she had gone out to try and find the Sandman for the little girl who had been run over by the motor-car and could not sleep.

So her mother kissed her and Mary told her about the seller of dreams she had seen and all that he had said, and her mother kissed her again with tears in her eyes, and told the neighbours, who had thought that Mary had been lost.

The neighbours in turn told the little sick girl, and the little sick girl sent for Mary, and, when Mary went to see her, put her little arms round her neck and said:—

"Oh, Mary, how kind of you to do this for me! I never thought I had any friends in the world."

After that Mary told her the story of the old man who sold dreams, and explained all he had told her, and it made the little sick girl ever so brave, and she said:—

"I'm sure it was the Sandman after all, because of course no one awake can see the Sandman; you must be asleep—but I never knew before that we all get the dreams that we deserve, and that if we are good and brave we can spend half our lives in Fairyland."

And that night the little sick child slept quite soundly, and had the very same dream

that Mary had had in the forest, and had a chat with the Sandman, and afterwards, when she was in pain, she was always comforted because she could hear his voice through the day saying :—

"Dreams to sell, Dreams to sell."

THE EMPEROR OF CHOCOLAND.

IT was Joan's birthday; she was only seven, and among the many beautiful presents she got there was a lovely big box of chocolates.

Now Joan was sometimes inclined to be greedy, and when she saw the pretty box she exclaimed :—

"Oh, how wonderful! I like this the best of all—I just adore chocolates."

Her mother hearing this, and knowing Joan's weakness, said: "Don't eat too many, dear. Perhaps you had better give them to mother to take care of, and you can have a few every day, then you won't be tempted to take more than is good for you."

So saying, her mother gave her a handful and then prepared to take the box.

"Oh, please," said Joan, "let me keep it. It was given to me I know when to stop."

"No," said her mother, "you must learn to obey," and she took the box from her.

"Run away, dear, and play," said her mother; but Joan did not run away, but sat sulking in the nursery.

"I want just one more," she said, as she had often said before, and running out into the passage she was just in time to see her mother hide them away in the big store cupboard.

Joan waited till she was out of hearing; then, opening the cupboard door, she spied the box upon the top shelf. Then, getting a stool, she was able to reach it down, and, closing the cupboard door, she ran back with it into the nursery and hid it under her pillow, where no one would suspect it.

THAT night, as Joan lay in bed, she opened the box and took just one more, and then another chocolate more, and still another, till she could not eat any more, and the box was half empty, and she fell asleep.

As soon as she closed her eyes she found herself in a large field.

Hullo! I wonder where I am?" she exclaimed—for it was not an ordinary kind of field

The grass, for example, was not grass at all, but pieces of angelica, with candied leaves, and real buttercups, and all the dew real sugar, and in the distance, what do you think?—snow-covered mountains made of solid nougat!

"This must be Fairyland," said Joan, and at once she began to eat up great sugar pebbles and lumps of the ground, which was nothing less than toffee.

It wasn't like in the parks, with "Keep off the grass" and "Don't pick the flowers" —there were no notices at all forbidding anything.

Then she saw the strangest people she had ever seen—made of ginger-bread with pink eyes and buttons and things all of sugar.

The houses, too, were sweets, with windows of barley sugar, which she looked through and saw beds that seemed as if they were made of whipped cream, so soft they looked.

"I wonder people don't eat up their houses," said Joan, and she was afraid of the hot-tempered ginger-bread people, or else she might have tried.

Instead she just picked up leaves of angelica grass, and the candied fruit off the trees, and the chocolate earth of the fields.

Then, after a little while, she espied a beautiful castle in the middle of a huge town, the walls of which seemed also made of something to eat, with towers of twisted peppermint rock all in different colours, and round it was a moat filled with maple syrup.

"Oh!" Joan thought, "I have never seen a more beautiful place in my life."

Then, as she drew nearer, she noticed whole rows of the daintiest little soldiers made of hard cream with marzipan coats, and before she knew what she was doing she had broken off the arm of one and eaten it.

It was rather more than was good for her, but she ate it quickly so that it would not be noticed, she thought—but soon she gave a cry of pain, and at once the silver bell on the top of the big toffee tower of the castle began to clang the alarm!

Joan got frightened—but it was too late.

In a minute she found herself surrounded by chocolate soldiers, and she was told that she was under arrest and would be taken before the Emperor of Chocoland, who was then living in the town, the name of which is Candyville, which, as everyone knows, is the capital city of Chocoland.

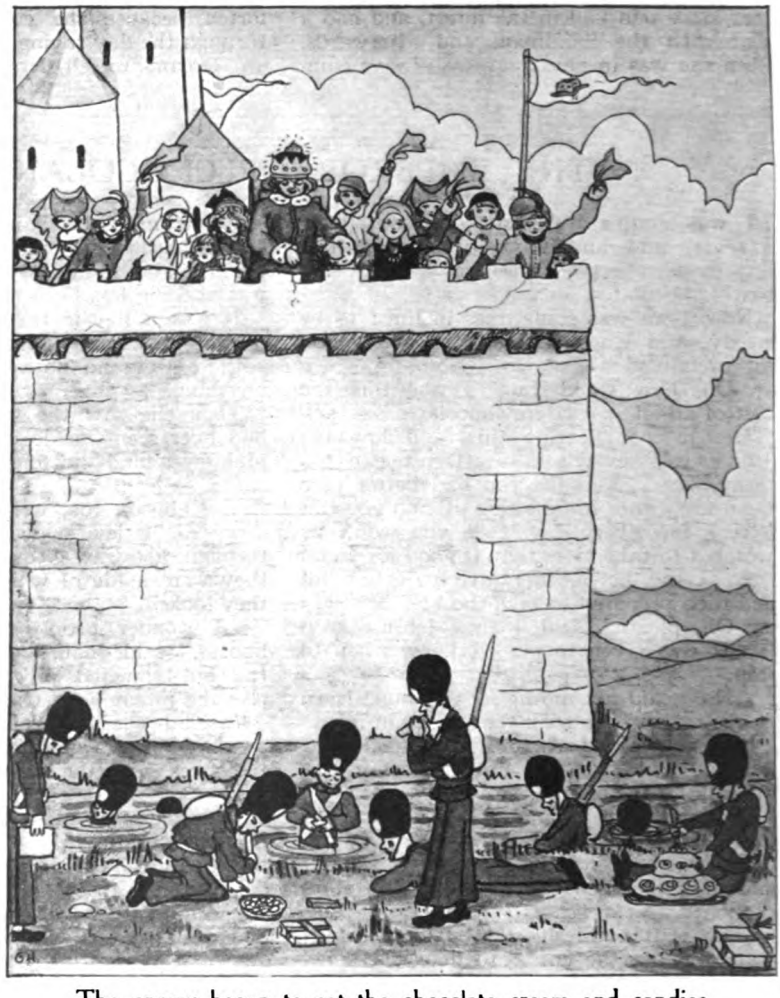
So they marched her through the big

gateway, made entirely of preserved fruit bricks, with sugar columns and a chocolate doorway studded with silvered nails made of almonds.

She expected, when she was brought before the king, who sat upon a magnificent sugar throne as fine as any wedding cake Joan had ever seen, that he would have an angry look, but, on the contrary, he had the sweetest smile.

"Ho! Ho!" said the Emperor of Chocoland, "so you are the little girl who was caught eating of my kingdom, are you?"

"Please," said Joan, "I didn't see any notices forbidding it, and everything was so very sweet," but she knew in her heart that she had no right to make such an excuse, for in any case the place was not hers.



The enemy began to eat the chocolate cream and candies.

The king smiled.

"Take her to the prison, and give her jam for breakfast," said the king, and Joan thanked him very much. But the king smiled again, and said: "And give her jam for lunch too, and for tea, and for supper."

This rather surprised Joan, who began to wonder what kind of place Chocoland was, and how it was that the enemy did not come and devour Candyville and its lovely sugar palaces, and robbers eat up the soldiers and the people eat up their houses.

But she had not been in the chocolate prison long before she began to change her mind.

The jam was lovely the first day, not quite so nice the second day, and after that she began to think it was positively nasty.

There were jam-pots all round her, all open, with spoons ready to help herself—but she was beginning to feel sick.

Oh, how she longed for an ordinary piece of bread! Indeed, she felt as if she would never be able to eat anything sweet for the rest of her life.

So she began to see how wrong she had been, and sent word to the king to say how sorry she was, and to ask his pardon, and the king forgave her, but just at that moment, when she was hoping to have a talk with him, there was a tremendous noise.

From all the windows of the castle of Candyville the Christmas crackers went off with a bang, and one of the soldiers said:—

"That's the enemy; we are being attacked."

"No wonder," thought Joan, "with all that sweet-stuff about. I don't understand how it has lasted so long"—for Joan had not yet learnt her lesson.

"On earth," she said to the king, who came up just at that time, "we lock our sweets up"—but the king only smiled.

"Foolish people can still get at them, though, can't they?"—and Joan felt ashamed.

"Come with me on the highest part of the castle," said the king, "and I will teach you the lesson of Candyville," and Joan followed him.

From there they could see the enemy swarming like flies across the plain and making for the castle.

"Why don't your soldiers try to stop them before they get too near?" said Joan.

"Wait and see," said the king. Then, lo and behold, they began to flood the moat around the town with chocolate cream, nice and warm, and the fields with treacle, and threw tons of preserved fruit and candies of all kinds towards the enemy, and the enemy began to eat and drink so that they could not fight.

The garrison of Candyville thereupon climbed the ramparts, and instead of looking angry, like the king had done with Joan, they began to smile, and then laugh openly as the poor attacking soldiers began to have too much of the good things they saw.

Yet try as they would they did not seem to be able to tear themselves away from the sweets, and they literally stuck fast in the lakes of chocolates and treacle and cream.

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed the king, and all his courtiers joined in the chorus. "Ha! Ha! Ha! we're winning. Victory!" and they all gave a great cheer, including, strange to say, Joan, of all people.

In a little while the attacking army was in full retreat, crying for doctors, looking absolutely green with indigestion, and when they were gone the king assembled the garrison and said:—

"Now let us get all our goodies back into our store cupboards—but every soldier can have just three candies each," and Joan watched it all from the topmost tower with the king.

Then just as she was about to ask him to forgive her and promise never to steal sweets again, she woke up to find her mother sitting beside her with a spoon, saying:—

"Never mind, dear, take your medicine—you've learnt your lesson."

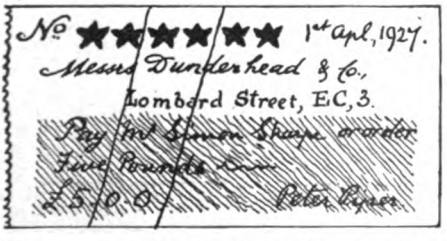
"I wonder how those poor soldiers feel?" said Joan. "I've got an awful headache."

"No wonder," said her mother, as she removed the lovely box of chocolates, crushed beyond recognition and almost empty, from under Joan's pillow.

PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

852.—THE CANCELLED CHEQUE.



THIS is a facsimile of a cheque drawn on Messrs. Dunderhead and Co. in favour of Mr. Simon Sharpe. These particular bankers always cancel their paid cheques by punching star-shaped holes in them, and it will be seen that in this case they have happened to punch out the six figures that formed the number of the cheque. The puzzle is to find out what those figures were. All the information I can give is this: It was a square number multiplied by 113, and when divided into three two-figure numbers by the lines crossing the cheque (as shown) each of these three numbers was a square number. Can you find the number of the cheque?

853.—THE AMBIGUOUS CLOCK.

A MAN had a clock with the hour-hand and minute-hand of the same length and indistinguishable. If it was set going at noon what would be the first time that it would be impossible, by reason of the similarity of the hands, to be sure of the correct time? Readers will remember that with these clock puzzles there is the convention that we may assume it possible to indicate fractions of seconds. On this assumption an exact answer can be given.

854.—A PHONETIC EXERCISE.

IN our puzzle No. 836 (January-February last), we considered those words that can be formed phonetically, so to speak, from letters of the alphabet, such as X P D N C (expediency). The reader may find it an entertaining pastime to construct from the following thirty-six letters fourteen well-known English words in the same phonetic manner. You must use all the letters given and no others, and form exactly fourteen words.

A, A, B, C, C, C, D, D, D, E, E, E, F, F, G, I, K, K, K, L, M, M, N, N, N, O, P, Q, S, S, T, T, T, V, V, X.

855.—SECURING THE ALMOND.

A CAKE is nine inches long and contains one almond, which is visible 2¼ inches from one end. The Provost and the Head Master (each secretly coveting the almond) cut and eat slices from the cake in turn. Every slice may be cut from either end, but must not be more than an inch or less than half an inch thick. The Provost having the first cut, who will get the almond? And, by what system can he make certain of it? The almond may be regarded as a mere point.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

847.—DANGER SIGNAL PUZZLE.

1 S	2 T	3 O	4 P
5 L	O	O	K
6 L	I	S	T
7 S	A	F	E

THE four words in their order, in which the letters downwards were shown as blanks, are: SELLERS, TROPICAL, GOOSEFOOT, and POCKETED. The words in the square suggest to the pedestrian that before crossing the street he should stop, look, and list in order to be safe.

848.—A QUEER NUMBER.

THE number is 961.

849.—AN OLD ENIGMA.

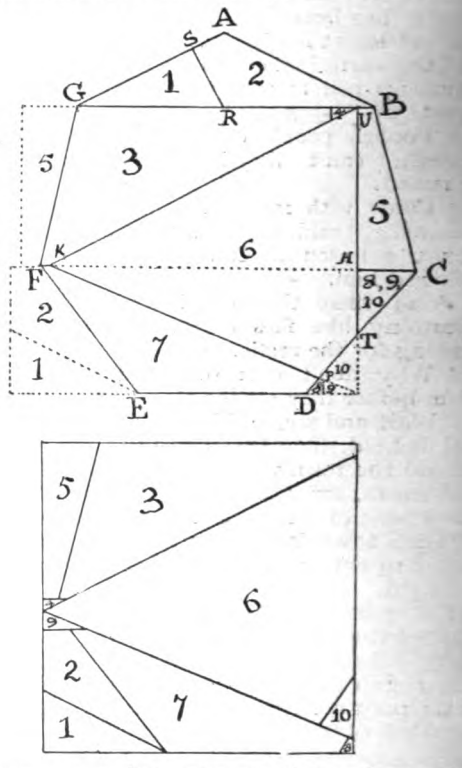
THE five vowels: A, E, I, O, U.

850.—THE MOTOR-CAR MAKER'S PROFIT.

THE prime cost of the car was £170, on which the seller made 170% profit. Add 25 to the selling price (£459), take the square root of the sum, deduct 5, and multiply the result by 10.

851.—HEPTAGON AND SQUARE.

DRAW and cut line B G; bisect it in R and cut line R S perp. to G A, and apply pieces 1 and 2 to E F as shown. Bisect C D in T; cut line T U perp. to B G, and C H perp. to T U. Apply piece 5 (turned over) to F G and the triangle C T H (turned round) to D T. On H F make H K (not to be cut) equal to side of required square. The heptagon is thus transformed into two rectangles, and students of this kind of puzzle will know how and why the remaining cuts will transform these into two other rectangles that together will



compose a perfect square, as shown. It can be proved by the Tables that the point K is inside the heptagon and P outside. Hence the construction is theoretically sound.

AN ingenious solution to the Spaniard's Chess Puzzle in our December issue has been found by the Rev. E. A. Forbes in 32 moves, the saving of three moves being obtained by a more economical play of the black pawns. Other solvers were later.

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 166.

(The Second of the Series.)

AGED sailor; in long stories
Full of storms and wrecks he glories.
One—the wedding guest he fretted—
Did a deed he much regretted.

1. What a fright! The hurly-burly
   Of such clock will wake you early.
2. Mighty fall of water, dashing
   Ever down, in thunder crashing.
3. Filled with salt, on table handy;
   Here is stored coal, wine, or brandy.
4. Holds Madras, Bombay, Calcutta.
   Its last letter do not utter.
5. Garden to our forbears given,
   They through sin from it were driven.
6. Take a stitch in time, I crave you,
   All these stitches it will save you.
7. Lofty building. Folk unable
   Were to finish one at Babel.

BOODLEBAR.

Answers to Acrostic No. 166 *should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor,* THE STRAND MAGAZINE, *Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on May* 10*th.*

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 165.

1. P	oun	D
2. R	owen	A
3. I	tsel	F
4. M	astif	F
5. R	ond	O
6. O	rchar	D
7. S	uff	I
8. E	**ar**	**L**
9. S	**all**	**S**

NOTES.—**Light 2. Either Rowena or Rebecca. 7.** Sufficient.

ILBERT P. G. E. PHILLIP
RANKAU WODEHOUSE OPPENHEI

JUN 2 1924
JUN 2 1924

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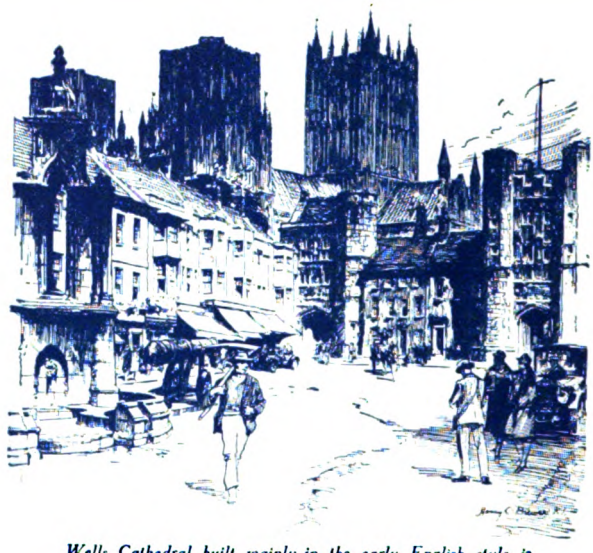

Wells Cathedral built mainly in the early English style, is largely the work of Bishop Reginald (1174-1191): the glorious west front was added by Bishop Jocelyn fifty years later.

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THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

Contents for June, 1927.

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Frontispiece: Then his eyes shone at her; and his arms took her to him.

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The characters and names in the stories in "The Strand Magazine" are entirely imaginary and have no reference to real persons.

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THROUGH THE MAJOR'S EYEGLASS

"The hold-up"

Look at George. He is holding up the traffic. His engine has stopped. The self-starter will not self-start. William is turning the handle. The handle will not start. Everybody is hating George . . . .

George has been thinking. He has just thought of the reason why. There is no petrol in his tank. Where is his spare tin? He has left it at home . . . .

George is lighting up an "Army Club," while everybody is telling everybody else how to remove him from the traffic. George says there's nothing quite so effective at these times as an "Army Club," because you don't want to think of anything else while you're smoking it.

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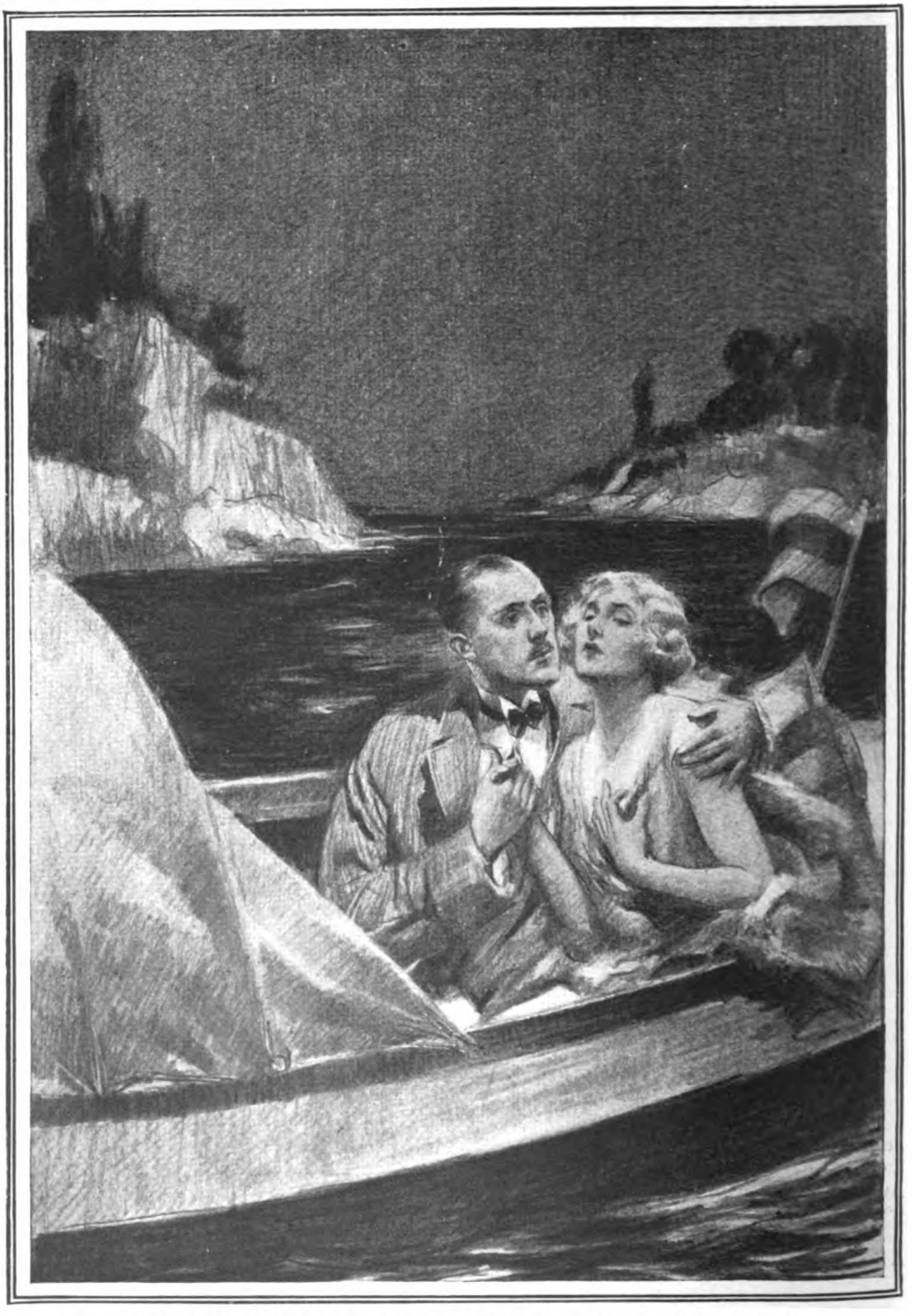
Army Club

THE CIGARETTE THAT SET A STANDARD

Cavanders Ltd. (Established 1775). *Pioneers of the Fourfold Pack*

JUNE, 1927.



THEN HIS EYES SHONE AT HER; AND HIS ARMS TOOK HER TO HIM.

(See page 538.)

Mediterranean Love

By GILBERT FRANKAU

Illustrated by J. DEWAR MILLS

I.

YOU will not find the place where this story happened on any ordinary map. It is just an hotel—a great white barrack of an hotel, perched just above a turquoise-blue gulf of sea. Behind are pine-clad foothills, and there is a nunnery hidden away among those foothills. And across the gulf—a couple of miles, maybe—there is a fishing-town: old long before a certain swashbuckling Admiral out of Genoa took it under his protection against the Moorish pirates; today, a dream of ancient colour where the painter, jaded after many months in his Paris atelier, finds both inspiration and peace.

But the white barrack of an hotel is not frequented by the painters. It is getting a little fashionable, you see. Villas are rising round it. And there is a tiny casino and a tiny night restaurant in the sea-village close by. Quite *chic* people, too—in Paris, in London, in Geneva, even as far away as New York—are beginning to gossip. "The food isn't very good there," runs gossip. "And the service leaves to be desired. But the place has a something, friend—a *je-ne-sais-quoi*—an atmosphere. Go there. See for yourself."

Such rumours, indeed, have reached even farther than New York. Which is why Anne Louise and her party hired those three cars in Milan.

The cars were, naturally, Italian; and their mechanism strange. Still, it didn't take Duncan Storrs more than an hour to relegate his chauffeur into the tonneau—and after that, for four whole days of dusty touring, he had Anne Louise to himself. Grey-haired Zelma Anschutz, chaperon of the party, didn't interfere. And the rest of the seven—the newly-married Pagets, Harry Peters, and Grace Corey—took the arrangement as a matter of course.

Anne Louise took it as a matter of course, too. Because she and Duncan had been half engaged to one another before they left college. Indeed, it wasn't until they were over the Alps and corkscrewing down to Monte Carlo that she had the impression of—of a something lacking in Duncan—of a new light on him, as it were. And even then she didn't know what it was that Duncan really lacked; nor how the new light had come to her, nor why.

What *was* the trouble about Duncan? It couldn't be his clothes or his appearance. Duncan had always been one of the best-looking and the best-dressed boys at the Country Club. And it couldn't be his conversation either; because his conversation hadn't altered a bit. He still talked about his business to her—and about the sort of house they would build if they finally decided to get married. And it couldn't, it certainly couldn't be his love-making. Because they had both of them decided, before starting for Europe, to "cut that out."

"I—I'm not the petting kind, Duncan," Anne Louise had said. And Duncan, being in that state when a young man will agree to almost anything, had let her have her way.

He was letting her have her way now; letting her sit silent and a little moody—young lips pursed, gloved hands interlocked, grey eyes hardly noticing the scenery—as they circled and circled that last stretch of undulating sea-road which leads to the great white hotel. "She's a queer kid," he thought. Yet, even so, did not realize the half of her queerness.

For if ever that something, that *je-ne-sais-quoi*, that atmosphere of the place where this story happened, took hold of anybody, it took hold of Anne Louise Clavering when she came through the village of the tiny night restaurant and the tiny casino into sight of the turquoise-blue sea-gulf and the age-old fishing town beyond. She experienced then, all suddenly and all unaccountably, her first real pang of

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adolescence. Everything about the place hurt her—not as beauty perceived without warning hurts the sensitive—but as new life hurts the bearer of it. And in her hurt she turned instinctively to Duncan.

Duncan's eyes, however, were with the road. All she perceived of him was the known profile, clean-cut, resolute, very American in its concentration on the immediate job.

He drove on, through the village, over the railway-crossing, past a villa or two, past pine trees, the sand at their off-side wheels. She turned away from him and stared seaward; asking help of the water-shimmer, of the sky. "What's hurting me?" she asked. "What's happened to me? Why am I feeling all—all broken inside?"

But no help came from her asking; and after a moment or so the worst of her hurt seemed by. She still felt broken—yet not so unpleasurably broken. Her heart, which had seemed to stop, was beating again. Her lips, which had seemed to grow dry, moistened. Her eyes, across which it had seemed a veil fell when she stared seaward, regained their normal vision; and as they did so the Italian chauffeur leaned over from the tonneau to tell them they had arrived.

"*A destra, Signore,*" said the chauffeur; and Duncan, obeying, turned to his right; changed into second; circled up a winding drive; and braked on a terrace of white gravel under the façade of the hotel.

Followed the usual parley with the concierge, the usual reception clerk, the usual porter, the usual dismounting from the car.

"Are you tired?" asked Duncan, which was also usual.

"No," said Anne Louise. "No. Not a bit."

And after that, for a full minute, she stood quite silent—taking it all in. The warmth of the Mediterranean sun was like a wine-bath. Everywhere the mad cricket chirped. Here, from a loggiaed balcony, bougainvillea drooped in purple clusters. There, orange and scarlet under wide windows, flaunted the midsummer zinnias. And a gay butterfly was hovering about the zinnias. And below—immediately below, beyond the fringing pine trees—lay that tiny maritime paradise into which she had come.

"It *is* paradise," thought Anne Louise; and so thinking became aware of a man.

The man was walking towards her. And the very first thing that Anne Louise noticed about him was his throat. His throat—he wore the neck of his white shirt wide open—glowed brown as a chestnut. So did his hands; so did his face. He was a tall man, too—at least three inches taller than Duncan. And as he came closer it appeared to her that he must be very proud.

Pride seemed to radiate from him; from his dark eyes, from his aquiline nose, from his prominent cheek bones, from the very manner in which the sleek black hair was brushed from his high forehead, and the fierce little moustache from his bright red lips.

As he went past the car into the hotel he did not appear to notice her. Yet she felt instinctively that he had noticed her; and wondered, instinctively, who he might be.

Then Zelma Anschutz arrived with the Pagets, and Harry and Grace followed almost immediately; and she forgot all about the proud stranger—and about the sudden hurt she had experienced—in the usual fuss and bustle of deciding who should have which of the reserved rooms.

II.

ANNE LOUISE'S room, as it so happened, had to be a little way away from the others, because private baths were scarce. And, also because of the bath—and a little because of Grace, who had had a disagreement with Harry, and would insist upon coming up to talk about it—it was after eight o'clock before she put on her silver evening dress and walked out on to her balcony for a last glimpse of the sun.

The sun was sinking behind the foothills in such a radiance as Anne Louise had never seen. The sea-gulf might have been one huge lilac. And a tiny breeze blew from it, cooling all the air. She opened her mouth, let the cool air blow into it; opened her arms, let the cool air blow under them; dropped her arms; let sheer physical well-being overwhelm her like a wave.

"I'm happy," she whispered to herself. "Happier than I've been since we left America. Happier than I've ever been in my life."

And in that mood she had her second encounter with the stranger of the afternoon.

He came out on to the very next balcony, dressed for the evening; stood there, smoking a cigarette. Again the pridefulness of him struck her; and because of that pridefulness she did not want to look towards him; did not wish that their eyes should meet. But somehow their eyes did meet; and somehow—Anne Louise never quite knew exactly how—they spoke.

"A marvellous evening," he said in perfect English; and she, "Yes. Marvellous. I didn't think the Riviera was like this."

"But it isn't the Riviera," he corrected. "This is the Côte des Maures."

He explained a little about the history of the Côte des Maures; and after a sentence or so she had to ask him how it was he knew so much.

"Because I was born *there*," he answered.

pointing across the gulf to where the one red light and the many orange lights of the fishing town had begun to sparkle along the foreshore.

"You're a Frenchman, then?"

"I suppose so." He thought it over. "Though my ancestors came from Genoa. And, of course, I went to school in England. As you can hear."

She complimented him on his English; and he smiled at her, displaying excellent teeth. "The lovely American," he thought. "What luck! And just as I was beginning to be bored."

III.

THERE is no need to relate, because these things happen the world over, how it came about that Count Argili (Eugène to his intimates) ingratiated himself with Anne Louise's party. Let it suffice that he did so, and that by the second evening of their stay they were taking coffee with him—not in the big hall where most of the French people had theirs, but on the terrace outside.

At his right sat Zelma Anschutz; at his left, very dark and very vivacious, the young Mrs. Paget; on the opposite side of the round table, Anne Louise. All very *comme il faut*, you will observe. Nothing to comment on so far. Nor was there anything to comment on when the Count—coffee and liqueurs finished—suggested "a stroll by the shore."

They didn't even go down to the shore in couples. The separation into couples only happened afterwards, when Zelma had found the bench under the pine. "Somebody give me a cigarette, please," said Zelma. "I'm going to sit here awhile. You children can do what you please."

Harry Peters, still disagreeing with Grace, elected to sit with her; and since Grace couldn't very well take Paget, she took Duncan instead. After which, it was almost automatic that Anne Louise and her "proud stranger" should find themselves strolling alone.

A full moon burned above them strolling, and the shadows of the pine branches were sharp sepia on silver sand-ridges. The indigo sea was already asleep.

"But it can be rough," said Eugène Argili. "No boats venture out when the mistral wind is blowing. Only mine—very occasionally; because she is built for rough weather—and because I am one of those funny people who like danger, who get a kick out of it, as you would say."

And after that his talk drifted, but without vanity, to the part he had played in the war. Anne Louise had been only eleven—and Duncan fifteen—when the war ended. All she knew of it was from books, from movies. But she had imagination, and soon her mind was painting pictures of this perfectly-groomed, perfectly-dressed young man (he couldn't be a day over thirty) now beside her, as he had been in those days—tired, muddy, crouching in shell-holes while the bullets whistled and the gas reeked and Verdun was a holocaust of death and blood.

"I do not often talk of these things," he ended. "But to-night something, you perhaps, brought it all back."

"I?" said Anne Louise.

"Yes. You. Though not you only. This place also. In battle, you see, one must have a vision. And my vision was always the same one; a girl, blonde-haired as you are, *petite* as you are, walking with me under moonlight by this Mediterranean sea."

"What a funny vision!" said Anne Louise; and she wanted to laugh at him. But, somehow, the laugh stuck in her throat. Suddenly she felt awkward; tongue-tied. So that it was sheer relief when Grace called to her, "Anne Louise! Anne Louise! Where have you two got to anyway? Zelma says she's sleepy. She wants to go in."

They strolled back to the hotel as they had strolled out of it, chatting gaily, all in a bunch. Quite a lot of people were on the terrace; others were dancing to a gramophone in the hall. But though Anne Louise adored dancing, Duncan's "Come along, kid. Let's show these folk how they ought to Charleston!" drew only a quiet, "No. Not to-night. To-morrow. I'm tired. I'm going to bed."

Zelma Anschutz took her as far as her bedroom; and kissed her good-night at the door. "You get straight into bed, honey," said Zelma. "Sleep well—and pleasant dreams." But Anne Louise was dreaming already; and her dreams kept her awake.

She couldn't even undress herself. All she could do was to stand in front of the long mirror, looking at the slim figure she made in her silver dress. *Petite!* How nicely he had put it. And how big he was. How ever so much bigger than Duncan.

Her mind drifted to Duncan as she had last seen him in the hall. He had looked disappointed, she thought. And just a wee bit sulky. Yes. His blue eyes had been rather sulky. What colour were the proud stranger's eyes? Very dark. Almost black.

Those black eyes haunted Anne Louise a little when she finally began her undressing; and the Count's voice haunted her for quite a few moments after she climbed into bed. But, being American, she had her sense of

humour as well as her imagination; and soon, laughing dreams away with a sensible, "How absurd he is. As though *I* could have been his vision," she fell asleep.

In the morning, however, she didn't feel quite so sensible. There was a certain excitement about getting up; about donning her dark-blue bathing-costume with the green cap and the green edging; about slipping on her red silk kimono. She even had the impulse not to wait for the rest of her party before making her way down to the beach.

That was the impulse which took her as far as the hall; and it was in the hall that she came face to face with the two nuns.

One of the nuns, to Anne Louise, looked a very old woman, and wrinkles showed under the black veil. The brown eyes were faded in their sockets; the hands at the end of the long sleeves, brown and slightly gnarled with work. They were working now, those slightly gnarled hands, helping to unpack a basket they had been carrying; helping to arrange the contents of it on the big table in the corner of the hall. Anne Louise asked the concierge to explain; and he explained in his broken English, "Once a week they come. Twice sometimes. To sell things for the convent."

So Anne Louise looked at the things—pocket-handkerchiefs, pillow-slips, a table-cloth. And the elder nun, naming the prices of them, looked at her.

Presently Grace arrived; then Zelma and the Pagets; then Duncan joined the party at the table; and lastly the Count. The Count didn't buy anything; but he took the greatest trouble in advising Anne Louise about *her* purchases. Also, he acted as interpreter for all of them when their inadequate French gave out.

"What a life for a woman!" he said, when the purchases were all paid for and they were lounging beachward. "I wonder what made her take the veil? She must have been quite attractive once."

"Disappointed in love, I guess," hazarded Vi Paget—and everyone laughed.

Everyone laughed a good deal that morning; and the Mediterranean laughed with them. They had a diving competition, and a canoe race, and cocktails in the little Provençal bathing pavilion; and Duncan and Harry Peters had a wrestling bout on the yellow sand. The Count didn't wrestle; but his swimming was rather a revelation—and at five o'clock, after they had had their siesta, he partnered Anne Louise at tennis, and they beat Harry and Grace, who had been runners up in the County Club Summer Tournament, six-two, six-four.

Duncan, who had umpired the match, didn't think "any great shakes" of the Count's tennis; and told Anne Louise as much while they were walking up to the hotel. "You're only jealous of him," said Anne Louise chaffingly.

"Jealous!" flashed Duncan. "Of that Dago. Not me!"

"He isn't a Dago."

"Oh, isn't he? Well—his ancestors were Dagoes, anyway. He told us so himself."

"Then you *are* jealous. And it's hateful of you."

"All right. I'm not contradicting. Have it your own way."

"What do you mean—have it my own way?"

"Well—you always do have things your own way, don't you?"

"Duncan Storrs!"

"Anne Louise Clavering!"

And before either of them understood what had happened, they were quarrelling so hard that neither of them noticed the two black-clad nuns, carrying their half-empty basket towards them down the slope.

IV.

DUNCAN STORRS and Anne Louise Clavering had quarrelled before—and with almost equal fury. But never before had they quarrelled about any third party, girl or man. "That's what's so *beastly* of him," thought Anne Louise when it was all over and she found herself alone in her bedroom. "That's why I'll never forgive him as long as I live."

She realized, as she undid her tennis frock, that she was still quivering with anger—and that her cheeks, usually a little pallid, had gone quite red. But after her bath she felt calmer; and by the time she walked out on to her balcony, her rage had cooled to a queer, quiet determination that Duncan must be "put in his place."

"I'll teach him never to treat me like that again," she thought; and, so thinking, turned to see the Count.

He gave her good evening; and began to talk with her, only the thin rail between their balconies separating them, the sunset below. That night the sunset was lowering; the air heavy. Fat clouds had settled on the rims of the hills.

"To-morrow," he told her, "the mistral will be blowing. And it is a pity. Because to-morrow I fetch my boat." Then, dropping his voice a semitone, because other people also were upon their balconies, "When I have my boat, will you come out with me in it? One evening. Just you and I. Alone."

If it hadn't been for that last determination about Duncan, Anne Louise would have answered, and quite quickly, "Alone?

So Anne Louise looked at the things—pocket-handkerchiefs, pillow-slips, a table-cloth. And the elder nun, naming the price, looked at her.

Of course not." But as it was, she hesitated a second; and he, realizing her hesitation, went on: "Perhaps I oughtn't to have asked such a favour. But you'll be going away so soon. And it wouldn't hurt anybody if I had you, just for one little hour, to myself."

His eyes were on her as he said that; and imperceptibly he had edged himself closer, so that their arms touched on the rail.

"To-morrow night—as a great favour," he whispered.

"I—I'll think about it," said Anne Louise.

She thought about it all through dinner—and the more she thought about it, the more it appealed. Duncan, sticking to his guns, had not apologized; seemed to be treating her like a fractious child. His mood was one of forced gaiety—and he had insisted that they must drink champagne.

"We all want pepping up," he said; and Grace, who had made it up with Harry, agreed with him. So they had three bottles between the seven of them; and Anne Louise took her share.

The wine didn't exactly go to her head. It only made her feel a bit reckless. And once or twice in her recklessness she looked across at the Count. The Count always sat alone at the table by the doorway; and, though he neither drank nor smoked, the head waiter was always particularly attentive to him. Most people, too, bowed to him as they left the room.

Anne Louise didn't bow, of course; but as the seven of them came past him, she half-halted for a second, and gave him a smile. Then she slipped her arm through Zelma's, and went to powder her nose.

"What's the matter with Duncan?" asked Zelma, powdering. "*You two* aren't going to start fighting, I hope?"

"No," said Anne Louise. "We aren't going to start. We *have* started. And as far as I'm concerned, we're going on."

"But Duncan's such a good fellow. Quite different from Harry."

"Except that he doesn't know how to behave."

The young lips set; and the elder woman, being wise in the ways of children, said nothing more. "It's only a tiff," decided Zelma Anschutz. "They'll get over it in no time. Probably be dancing together before the night's out."

BY half-past ten, however, with the gramophone going wildly, Zelma Anschutz began to realize that even one of her wise judgments might be at fault. She had known Anne Louise since her babyhood. But never before had she seen Anne Louise behave like this.

Three separate times Duncan had asked her to dance with him; and each separate time she had said exactly the same thing: "You know perfectly well that I'm not going to dance with you"; and twice, directly after her refusal of Duncan, she had let Count Argili take her to the floor. And it wasn't only that, either. It wasn't even the way the child had danced with Count Argili. It was the—the something different in the child's grey eyes.

Always before, those eyes had been cool, collected, wholly untemperamental. Whereas to-night they—they smouldered under the straight dark brows. Zelma, who remembered Anne Louise's mother, began to feel quite uncomfortable about that smouldering; to wish to goodness that the music would stop.

But the music didn't stop; and after a while Duncan hid himself in the billiard-room; and after a while the Count asked Anne Louise to dance again—and when they had done dancing, he suggested "a breath of air."

"That'd be rather nice," said Anne Louise, who had seen Duncan making for the billiard-room. "Just wait till I get a wrap."

On her way upstairs for the wrap she had a moment's misgiving. Down in the hall, however, the misgiving went. She even put a hand on the Count's arm as they emerged on to the terrace; and hardly seemed to notice when, once they were safely among the pine trees, his hand touched hers.

His hand touched hers so very gently; and his voice, too, was so gentle as he said: "One very happy; the other very unhappy. I am sorry for that other. But for myself I am glad."

Anne Louise didn't say anything; yet neither did she withdraw from him. Only when he lifted her hand from his arm, and bent his head, and would have kissed it, did she protest.

"No," she protested then, her fingers stiffening. "No. Please."

"But why not? It is only a—a little homage."

So she let him kiss her fingers; wondering, as his lips brushed them, why she had thought of him as proud. "He isn't proud," she thought. "He's—he's just a polished gentleman." And with the thought came another, sequel to that impression she had experienced while a hired car was corkscrewing down to Monte Carlo: "And Duncan isn't. Duncan's only a raw college boy."

When they came back, the gramophone was closed and the hall beginning to empty. Zelma, sipping a weak brandy-and-soda, sat with the Pagets. The other three had disappeared.

"Won't you join us for a nightcap, Count?" asked Athol Paget.

The Count, as was his habit, accepted a little Evian water, and sat with them for a quarter of an hour. Then, excusing himself on the grounds that he must be up early, he went to bed.

"Where have Grace and Harry got to?" asked Anne Louise, when he had left them. And Vi Paget answered: "There's some sort of a night-club in the village. They and Duncan went there about half an hour ago."

"Oh, did they?" said Anne Louise—and again she reminded Zelma Anschutz of her mother, who had certainly not wanted for temperament, whatever other wants she may have had.

V.

ANNE LOUISE slept badly that night; and when she woke next morning it was to a different world. The clouds had cleared; but a high wind whistled from the foothills, and the whipped gulf-water held all the colours of a peacock's tail under the steady sun.

The wind made her nervous. Drinking her coffee, getting into her bathing-dress, premonitions harried her. It seemed that she must be in some danger. "But that's absurd," she thought. "Absurd." Then she thought over her quarrel with Duncan; her last night's experience with the Count.

"I wonder just how much I like the Count?" she considered. "I wonder just how angry I am with Duncan?" And both questions seemed to answer themselves before lunch.

For Duncan didn't bathe that morning; and Grace, asked about the night-club, admitted that they had had "quite a time" there; and just before midday, when they were sunning themselves in the lee of the bathing pavilion, Anne Louise looked up across the wind-whipped water to observe a low-decked motor-boat dancing and tossing and tearing its way to shore. Foam flung from the bows of that motor-boat, and the sea boiled in its wake; and forward at the wheel of it, bare-necked and bare-headed, sat the Count.

Boat and man made a great picture as they circled for the little landing-stage; and some age-old instinct in Anne Louise leaped to that picture. So that her fingers were not quite steady when the man, his boat moored, came over to her and shook hands with her, and bade them all good day. Also, she remembered a certain half-promise she had made the previous evening; and wondered whether she ought to keep it—and knew that she wanted to keep it, whether she ought to or no.

But that night she couldn't keep her promise, because the mistral was still blowing; and next day, with no warning whatsoever, Zelma fell ill. "Three days in bed," decreed the old doctor whom Eugène Argili fetched sixty kilometres for them. "It is a local fever we have here. Nothing serious. Plenty of hot milk. Plenty of aspirin. *Voilà tout.*"

The whole hotel regretted Zelma's illness; the French people came up to their table to inquire about her; one or two of the English were almost equally polite. Nobody's regret, however, was half so keen as Duncan Storrs'—and for this reason, that Zelma's illness tied his hands. "This damn place," ruminated Duncan Storrs. "We've got to stick at least another three days of it. Hell!"

Observe, please, how nearly Duncan—Scottish of ancestry—had stumbled on to the psychological secret; observe that it was the place he damned—and not the girl. But don't imagine for a moment that this proved any consolation to him, or made him behave with any more wisdom, while Zelma lay abed. Imagine him, on the contrary, behaving as only a young fool of twenty-four can behave when the girl he's always been in love with tells him she's "through."

Anne Louise hadn't gone quite as far as telling him that in cold words; but her eyes had said so, and more also, when they met at lunch after his visit to the night-club. "Don't try to explain," they had said, "because it's no use."

So Duncan didn't try to explain; and Grace, who was a bit of a cat in her way, used him to play off against Harry; and Athol and Vi were still too much in love with one another to worry about other people's love affairs—and Eugène Argili was no longer bored.

What his exact feeling towards her might be, Anne Louise couldn't quite discover. What her feelings towards him were, she knew—or thought she knew, which amounts to the same thing—on the first day Zelma took to her bed. It was after lunch, a good while after; and, except for the two nuns almost motionless at their linen-littered table, she was alone in the big sunlit hall. He came very quietly round the pillar by which she was sitting, asked if he might join her, and drew up another chair.

"Are you worrying about Mrs. Anschutz?" he asked. "Really, you needn't. Dr. Estrange is absolutely reliable. I've known him ever since I can remember. As a matter of fact, he brought me into the world."

"I'm not worrying," said Anne Louise. "Only it's a nuisance, isn't it? I mean——"

"You mean you were thinking of leaving us," he broke in, leaning ever so slightly towards her.

"No. Honestly, I didn't mean that. Only, you see——"

"You don't want to leave us, then?"

"Of course I don't."

"You're sure of that?"

Anne Louise was sure, absolutely. But she didn't say so. Instead, she looked at

him. "Is he in earnest?" she asked herself; and aloud, "What does it matter one way or the other? Either way, we can't go for three days."

"It matters a lot to me," said Eugène Argili; and he looked back at her, the pupils dilating in his eyes. "I want my hour with you—that hour on the sea by moonlight. And I want more than that of you. Ever so much more."

"You—you mustn't talk to me like that," said Anne Louise, looking away from him.

"Why not? Since I feel like that towards you. Tell me, you—you aren't promised to anyone, are you?"

"Promised?"

"I'm sorry. I don't often make a mistake with my English. I don't mean promised. I mean engaged."

Anne Louise didn't answer that question right away. She couldn't. Her heart was thumping too much. And besides, it made her feel such a fool. Was she engaged to Duncan? Or wasn't she? If so, she must certainly break it off.

"I—I don't know," she said at last.

"Well"—he smiled at her averted cheek—"if you *don't* know, it can't be very serious, can it?"

"No," said Anne Louise; and turned to him again, and returned his smile. And after that he went on making love to her, as Duncan Storrs had never learned to make love; and she fenced with him, artlessly yet adequately—and because there was nobody to listen except two old French nuns, who couldn't possibly understand anything except their own language, did not drop her voice by a single semitone when she made her decision:—

"Yes. That's a promise. The very first evening the mistral stops blowing, I'll come out with you in your boat."

VI.

THE mistral, as is its habit, blew itself out in seventy-two hours; and the last twenty-four of those hours Anne Louise Clavering spent in a rose-mist of romance.

She was in love—not as she had been in love with Duncan, coolly and wisely; but feverishly and foolishly, with that quick

Mediterranean love which is born of sunshine and the sea. Whither that love might lead, she never even speculated. For the moment, moments sufficed.

And most wonderful of all moments was that one when he and she slipped away down the slope through the pine trees and so to the waiting boat. She had carried it all off so easily—first going up to say good night to Zelma; and then, when she came back with her coat, announcing her intention to the rest. And nobody had tried to counter her intention—not even Duncan with his sullen, "Don't drown her,

will you, Count ? There's still a bit of a swell on, outside the point."

Still, Duncan's face haunted Anne Louise for a second as Eugène Argili handed her down from the landing-stage to her seat beside the forward wheel. "It's hateful, hurting people," she thought. Then all

"I want my hour with you—that hour on the sea by moonlight. And I want more than that of you. Ever so much more."

thought deserted her as they went speeding across the gulf.

The gulf-water was still sore after its mistral-whipping. The boat danced under them. Overhead, diamond stars stared down from a black velvet sky. Away beyond the dark hump of the point, the moon rose. Closer, the one red light at harbour-mouth of the fishing-town glared like a giant ruby above the pennant at their prow.

He increased speed, and the pennant whistled to it. The thutter of their engines was almost too loud for speech. But the girl at his side hardly needed speech—and Eugène Argili knew it; let the sea do most of his wooing for him, as it had perchance done wooing for that Genoese ancestor of his when the great lamps glowed on the galley-sails and the pikemen trod the poop.

They swished past the red light into shadows; and now the ground-swell caught them, and a spatter of foam leaped inboard, and he asked her if he should slacken speed.

"No," she said. "No. This is glorious. Go on! Go on!"

"It is you who are glorious," he answered—and the words thrilled her, so that she leaned towards him and their shoulders touched. He took a hand from the wheel; put an arm about her; felt her body pliant to him. "Close to me," he said. "Come close."

"Why?" she laughed at him.

"Because I want you to."

"Why do you want me to?"

"Because I love you, Anne Louise." And on that, swiftly, lightly, his lips brushed her cheek.

"Do you love me?" he asked her; and when she could not answer, "A little bit, I think. Just a little bit. Won't you love me just a little bit, to-night?"

Another spatter of foam interrupted his love-making, forcing him to take his arm from her. Then they were round the point and into smoother water again. "Dangerous here," he said. "Rocks." And, "Danger?" thought Anne Louise. "What's danger? Who cares?"

And that thought was still on her when they came, at half-speed, at quarter-speed, into the tiny cove.

Rocks ringed the cove; and moonlight silvered it. The pennant at their prow had ceased its fluttering; the thutter of the engine had died. Only Anne Louise's heart was thuttering now. She could feel it pulsing like an engine under her breast. "I adore you," he was saying. "I've adored you since that moment I first set eyes on you. Don't go back to America. Don't! Don't!"

Then his eyes shone at her; and his arms took her to him; and his mouth sought hers, as Duncan's had never sought it, in a kiss.

VII.

EUGÈNE ARGILI'S boat did not return across the gulf as it had gone out, pennant stiff, engines roaring. It returned very slowly, propeller hardly revolving, steersman's fingers hardly touching the wheel. But Anne Louise didn't notice. Anne Louise didn't care. He loved her! He didn't want her to go back to America! Nothing else mattered. Nothing in the world!

At last they came to shore. At last they landed; and began to make their way, his arm about her, up the slope under the pines. She wanted to stop under the pines; but he would hardly let her. "It is so late, little one," he said. "See—already they are putting out the lights." Then, kissing her hotly, he whispered words to her—and, before she could answer them, had led on.

They came back to the hotel, as they had gone out of it, boldly. Athol and Vi were waiting up for her. Zelma's temperature was normal. To-morrow afternoon she would be getting up. "I'm so glad," Anne Louise managed; "and it's been so lovely on the water, and you won't mind, will you, if I go to bed?"

"Of course not," said Athol; "the bar's closed, anyway"—and his wife's, "Don't forget we're bathing early," followed her as she went up the stairs.

Anne Louise went up those stairs very slowly. At the first landing she turned and looked down. Eugène still stood where she had shaken hands with him. His eyes were still on her. His whispered words still echoed in her ears. "How dared he?" she thought; and then, "Dare I?" and again, "Does it matter what one dares, to-night?"

She turned away, and went on again, very slowly, down the broad corridor to her own room. Only one light burned in the corridor; only the moonlight illuminated her own room. She put her hand to the wall switch; thought better of it; took off, hung up her coat; started to take her frock off, thought better of it; stood stock-still.

In that moment her mind dithered. She was like one drowning. Past, present, future tangled themselves inextricably in her mind. The past had held Duncan; the present, Eugène. What did the future hold—the immediate future—the future of Eugène's "Only for an instant—only to hold you in my arms again—only to kiss my little girl one last good night?"

"Why shouldn't he?" she thought; and began to undress, very slowly, wandering here, wandering there about the dim moonlit room. Wandering, she remembered Duncan's photograph on her dressing-table. Poor Duncan! He, too, had wanted to marry her. And she'd almost promised. How silly that seemed—now that she knew what love could really be. . . .

Presently she was half undressed. Presently she had found a dressing-gown, her white slippers. And presently she was waiting, a little breathlessly, for him to come in.

Waiting, her mind dithered again. Ought she to let him come in? But what harm could it do? He was a gentleman. He didn't want her to go back to America. It would only be for an instant. And she wanted that last kiss; wanted it desperately—she who had once said, "I'm not the petting kind."

How foolish! And how it showed one Still, she had been like that once.

And on that, for the first time since her quarrel with Duncan, Anne Louise felt just the tiniest bit guilty. Suddenly her eyes sought Duncan's photograph. Suddenly she decided that the photograph oughtn't to be there.

"I'll put it away now," she decided. "At once. Before Eugène comes in to kiss me good night."

Yet when, moving swiftly athwart the moonlight, she reached her dressing-table, Anne Louise never laid a finger on that photograph. For in front of it, touching it, lay an envelope—a large white envelope which had not been there when, after saying good night to Zelma, she had gone in for her coat. "I *know* it wasn't there," she said to herself; and bending down to examine the thing could just make out her own name, written largely in a bold hand. "Urgent," she made out. "Miss A. L. Clavering. Room 117."

And because of that word "Urgent," or perhaps because of some deeper instinct, Anne Louise clicked on the dressing-table light; opened the envelope; took out the letter and the news-clipping—and wondered, dumbly, as the purport of them penetrated to her intelligence, how God—if, as the letter said, there were a God—could be so cruel.

Then, her lips set though the knees were shaking under her, she moved away from the dressing-table; reached the doorway; fumbled for the door-bolt — and shot it home.

VIII.

AND, "Don't ask me how it all happened," says Zelma Anschutz. "All I know is that when I got sick she'd hardly speak to him; and that the very day I got well again she came to me and said, 'Oh, Zelma, can't we get out of this place quickly?' and that *I* said, 'Well, say, I don't think I ought to leave till to-morrow'; and that she said, 'I guess you could if you just made a try for it'; and that anyway we did leave that day—and that when we got to Paris Duncan Storrs went straight to the Embassy, and that they had quite a wedding, though of course not half as good a wedding as they'd have had if they'd waited till we got home."

And presently she was waiting, a little breathlessly, for him to come in.

Nor does even Duncan Storrs know exactly why Anne Louise didn't wait till they got home; because Anne Louise Storrs has never yet shown him that letter which begins: "My child, forgive me for being English and for having overheard two of your conversations," and ends, "I'm sorry to write like this; but before I took the veil I, too, had just such an experience—only nobody warned me, as I'm warning you with the enclosed."

And "the enclosed" Anne Louise Storrs can't ever show to her husband—for the simple reason that she tore it up; having no further use for a newspaper photograph of "The beautiful Countess Argili, at present summering with her three children at the Lido; but who will shortly rejoin her husband, Count Eugène Argili, in the South of France."

SENTIMENT TO THE RESCUE

by

ROLAND PERTWEE

Illustrations by
C. E. BROCK, R.I.

SHUSHAN HILLIARD—he called himself Shushan; it was the nearest he could get to his own name, which was Ewan—could not believe his eyes. It is not the habit of ownerless two-shilling-pieces to lie about except in dreams. Yet there it lay at his feet—a shiny silver circle upon a bed of cinders.

Shushan gripped it in his two small palms and stood with goggling eyes. Two shillings was a fortune—the largest he had ever possessed without restriction. Of course, at Christmas and on his birthdays, uncles, aunts, and other kind people made him presents of money, but always, for a reason that to Shushan seemed insufficient, the only control he had of his wealth was the doubtful enjoyment of inserting it, piece by piece, into the slot of a money-box, whence neither supplication nor a knife dipped in treacle could persuade it to return.

His mother and father said he was too young to have money to spend. They gave him one penny a week and said it was plenty. They overlooked the high cost of living since the war. His father and mother overlooked many things which one had thought were only too apparent.

They overlooked each other.

For all Shushan knew to the contrary, overlooking each other might be part of the scheme of married life—but he could not escape from the conviction that to do so was an error of judgment. The demonstrative side of his own nature, checked of expression by environment, viewed askance the livery of indifference in which his father and mother appeared before the world. They did not seem to get any fun out of it, nor put any fun into it. If his mother talked it was to complain about the servants or the omissions of the tradesfolk; if his father talked it was to read tedious extracts from the newspapers to the unlistening air. They never laughed—or made each other cry—they never even had a row to brighten things up.

From this barren and unprofitable port, Shushan Hilliard sailed his argosies upon the high seas of adventure.

When he found the two-shilling-piece he had no idea that this was the precise sum required to rescue his parents from the slough of indifference into which they had declined. Selfishly, he thought of no one but himself and the potentialities for enjoyment his discovery had opened to him. Ever since he could remember he had yearned to go to the films, and ever since he could remember his father had said he was much too young for sentimental tosh and excitement of that kind. But now, with a capital of two shillings, he determined to realize this cherished ambition, asking neither leave nor favour.

Luck favoured him inasmuch as his mother had embarked on a long round of calls and his father was in London and would not be back until dinner-time.

It was two miles to Ryeford, the market town, but Shushan knew of a milk-cart that travelled thither about that time of day—and he could be sure of a lift home in the car ordered to meet his father. There would be nothing strange in that, for often, when a car had been ordered, he had walked to the station for the pleasure of the ride home.

Taking a short cut across a bare hillside and through a belt of trees, Shushan struck at the high road as his friend the milkman hove in sight.

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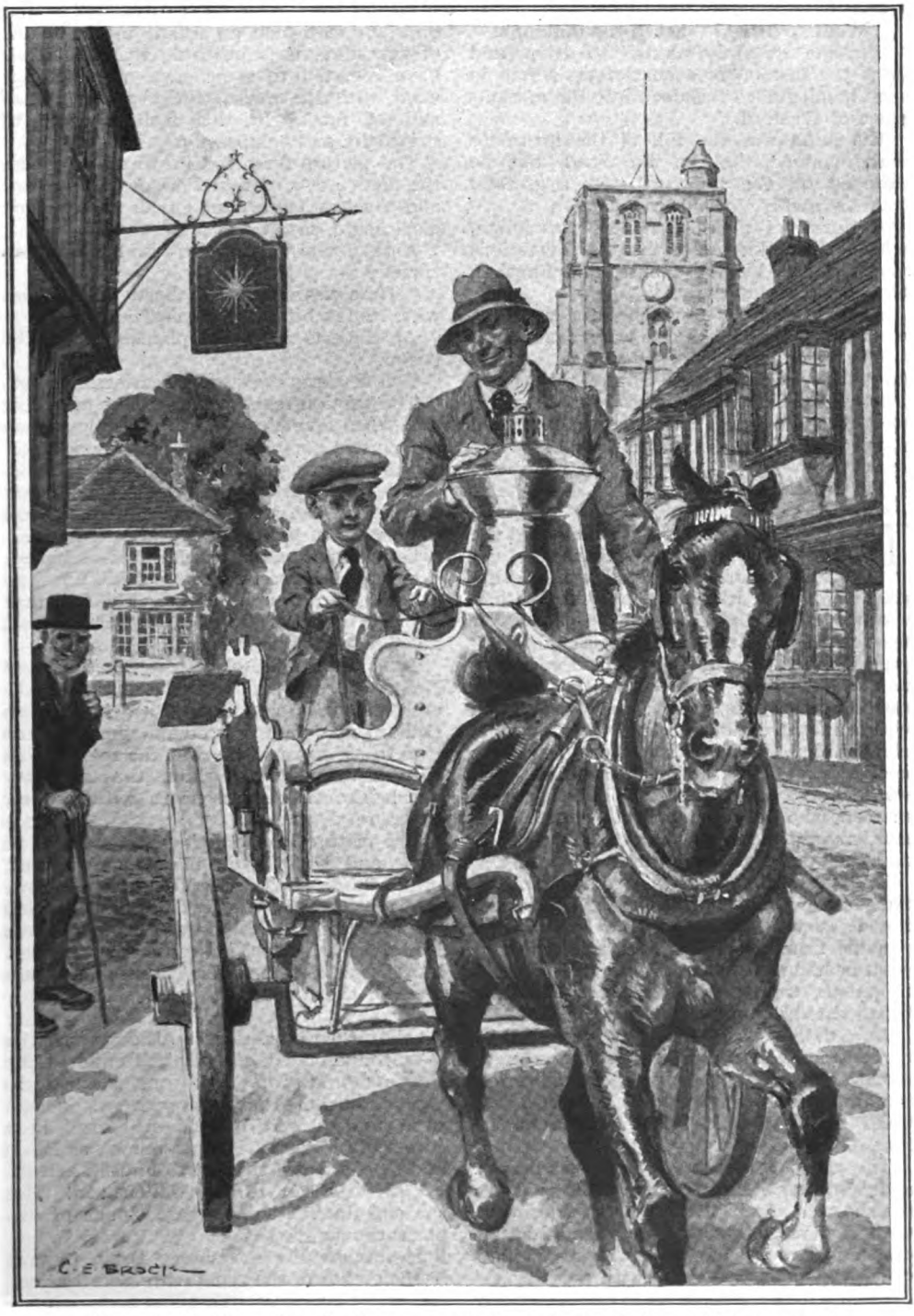


After the fashion of a charioteer, a rein in each hand, he guided the steed into the market-place.

Shushan hailed him as an equal and boarded the jangling little cart.

" Want to drive ? " asked the milkman.

Shushan certainly wanted to drive, and after the fashion of a charioteer, a rein in each hand, guided the steed into the market-place of Ryeford.

His mind was too full of the future to make conversation on the road, but he dropped off the tailboard with a grateful " 'Anks, awf'ly," which was enough.

A queue of pleasure-seekers was filing, with nerve-racking sloth, into the mysterious gloom of the Picture House, and Shushan took his place at the end.

After an eternity he reached the turnstile, where his two shillings was transformed into a pink ticket and eightpence change. A very kind lady, wearing a frilly apron and cap of pale yellow, flickered an electric torch at his feet, tore the ticket ruthlessly in half, and popped him into a seat facing a big white screen.

The adventure had begun.

THE first film that afternoon revealed the hazards and dilemmas of prairie life, and was an affair so charged with excitement that when it came to an end Shushan sprang to his feet and yelled aloud. A matron on his left said " Shush, ducky," pulled him back into his seat, and gave him half a Bath bun. Shushan, rather embarrassed, said ' 'Anks, awf'ly,' gobbled the bun with a mouth rendered dry by excitement, choked himself, and scattered crumbs on the neck of a fat man who sat in front, and who said he was a dirty little pig. Then the stout matron, who was also a stout friend, told the gentleman in front that he was a pig himself, and thus put matters on an even footing.

The next item was a topical gazette. Shushan did not think a great deal of this, but it served to restore him to a more equable frame of mind. He reflected that what he had just seen was illustrative of those fragments from the newspaper his father broadcasted across the breakfast table.

Indeed, Shushan's thoughts were well at home when the special attraction, a paramount, exclusive, heart appeal, character-building picture entitled " And a Little Child——" flashed its first caption upon the screen.

The words were super-charged with beauty and sentiment, but the time allowed was too short to admit of Shushan reading more than a bare half before he found himself plunged into a mountain range behind which the moon was rising with rapidity.

Upon a rock silhouetted against the Queen of Night was the lonely figure of a child with a girl's curly head and a pair of boy's trousers encasing an apex of such rotundity as to inspire in the heartless thoughts of planting thereupon a sturdy kick. Had Shushan met such an infant in the traffic of everyday, it is probable that he would have resorted to some such measure, but what with the music, the glamour of Art and of moonlight, his feelings were of sympathy and compassion.

The picture dissolved into a room where the figures of a man and a woman with dry and loveless faces, and an air of frowning displeasure, sat at a breakfast table.

A caption struggled to infuse humour into tragedy :—

" Time was when Al Roberts thought his wife, Nell, a bit of Heaven—Time *was* ! "

Al Roberts then complained about the bacon.

Nell Roberts registered weariness.

The caption registered a missfire epigram :

" When love flies out of the window there are always complaints about the cooking."

Shushan caught his breath and blinked. Whatever effect these words produced upon the rest of the audience, to him they were like shafts of light piercing a dark place.

Some idiot near by laughed—laughed. Like an observer in an aeroplane, Shushan leaned forward and stared. He felt that at any moment the puzzle which had mystified his young life might be solved.

In the five minutes that followed, Al and Nell revealed in a variety of forms that dullness and indifference with which Shushan Hilliard was all too familiar. So actual, so true to his parents' life was the sequence as to make him uncomfortable that so many people should be present to witness their exposure.

The picture kept dodging from present to past, and back again in a manner that, although perplexing, served to show how the misunderstanding which had divided the affections of Nell from Al and Al from Nell had arisen. The cause was trifling, but the effect terrible. Shushan's heart bled for them.

AND then came into the room the round-ended, curly-haired child of the mountain-top. No one seemed to want the child—that was apparent. He-she went and played by himself-herself in a corner of the room. His-her name was Brian and he-she had a title all to himself-herself.

" Little Brian Roberts—their son. But the sun doesn't shine where clouds of displeasure mar the sky."

It was awfully sad seeing Brian playing in the corner of the room with a cotton-reel. He seemed to have the same requirements and about as much intelligence as a kitten. No one spoke to him or stroked him, for all that he looked so lonely and slightly

imbecile. None but the tender eye of the camera marked the tear that coursed down his cheek. Poor Brian — poor brat — balanced on that ample beam—with a girl's dimpled knees tucked under him and a boy's name to disguise them. If ever was a sight to wring the heart it was here.

Shushan, of course, was a sensible, stony-minded little chap with a proper contempt for sentiment, but, even so, the spectacle of this screen child's grief was more than he could bear. It was not that he was consciously sorry for Brian, who was obviously rather a softy, but for the first time in his life he was downright sorry for himself. He saw what he had never seen before—that he wasn't getting a fair show. In face of his parents' apathy his need for affection—for a lark—for fussing over had been overlooked. Living as he did in the lonely country house, he had little opportunity for comparing his lot with that of other children. Until now he had not complained, but vaguely he had believed there was room for improvement—and here was the testimony of this picture to prove him right.

In the turmoil of such thoughts, Shushan lost the thread of the story and picked it up at a point where Brian, while showing some small kindness to a pig, pondered upon a plan to re-unite his father and mother in the bonds of affection.

It would be tedious, if not a breach of the laws of copyright, to follow the tale through all its variants to the final scene where Al and Nell rediscover their love for each other and, punctuated with many embraces, embark on a journey to buy for Brian the " loveliest toy."

It is enough to say that through Brian, and Brian alone, this happy conclusion was reached. Bit by bit the sterling child wove a web of love to ensnare the sterile emotions of Al and Nell. He did it all by kindness, kindly deeds—and kindly words matched and strung like pearls on a thread.

When the music stopped and the picture faded into the likeness of a tortoise upon whose back view was written " THE END," and underneath, " IT'S A HEART PICTURE," Shushan Hilliard struggled out into the sunlight with a mist before his eyes and hope in his soul.

THE clock on the Corn Exchange informed him that it was three-quarters of an hour before his father's train was due. But the mental turmoil in which he found himself did not allow Shushan to think of waiting. He felt he must walk—walk. The plot which was forming in his mind needed exercise and motion for its development.

To bring about a revival of affection in his own home similar to the one he had just witnessed was not a task to be undertaken lightly or without preparation. He paused to survey his reflection in the mirrored back-screen of a boot shop, and what he saw filled him with apprehension. He had no illusions about himself; he was an ordinary bullet-headed, lean-flanked boy without even a wave in his hair. Unlike Brian, he had neither good looks, pretty ways, nor beseeching eyes. When he screwed up his face to register infinite tenderness, he only succeeded in making himself look comic. It was clearly evident, then, that to succeed he must not depend upon externals, but rather on the use of the exact words and situations shown in the picture. With brows knit, Shushan set his face homeward; but scarcely had he left the town half a mile behind before a sudden inspiration sent him hastening back at a run. A little while afterwards his small figure, bent beneath the burden of a huge cardboard box, struggled gallantly up the hill.

HIS mother was changing her frock when he got in, which gave him an opportunity to make a few preparations without fear of being disturbed.

When Owen Hilliard, his father, entered the house, he found Shushan on hands and knees in the lounge hall, playing with a cotton-reel. Shushan's appearance had undergone an æsthetic change. Instead of a collar and tie he was wearing a cricketing shirt—open at the neck—*négligé* and Byronic. Also, his hair was brushed the wrong way.

Owen Hilliard hung his hat, tossed a pair of gloves on a side table, sniffed at the smell of cooking in the air, and frowned.

" Time you were in bed," said he.

Shushan looked up with the blind innocence of a kitten.

" I was waiting for you to come home, Daddy."

" Then don't say it in that tone of voice, and pick up that cotton-reel before it throws somebody over."

" Yes, Daddy, I will," said Shushan. " I hadn't thought of that. Someone might tread on it and fall down, mightn't they ? You or Mummy."

Owen Hilliard cocked an eyebrow warily. He was a suspicious man.

" Haven't you got a comb ? " he demanded.

" Oh, yes, Daddy, a lovely comb."

" Then use it," said Owen Hilliard, and went upstairs to wash.

Shushan heard the bathroom door open, the sound of running water, then his mother's voice—flat and lifeless.

" Is that you, Owen ? "

A pause.

" It is."

"Will you put out some water for me?"

Another pause.

"If you *want* some."

"I wouldn't have asked unless——"

"All right! Very well."

As the hot water from the geyser ran into the brass can it made complaining noises.

"Tclock! Great shame—great shame. Wollop—too bad."

"It's there," said Owen, came from the bathroom and met his wife on the landing.

"The whole house smells of onions," he said.

"We are *going* to have Irish stew," said Phyllis.

Owen said "Why?" but not as if he wanted an answer.

"It's Wednesday, isn't it? We always *do* have Irish stew on Wednesdays."

"I don't know why we do," said Owen.

"We have it because you like it."

"I don't remember having said I like it."

Phyllis became vague.

"One must have a change sometimes, Owen."

"How do you mean?" he demanded.

"From joints," said Phyllis.

"Where's the change if one's had Irish stew last Wednesday and every other Wednesday?"

Phyllis seemed to have lost all interest. She said:—

"I don't mean a change from Wednesdays, I mean a change from joints."

"I suppose you know what you do mean?" said Owen, wearily.

Phyllis poured the water into the basin, felt it, let it run away again because it wasn't hot, and started to draw some more.

Through a mist of steam she asked:—

"Why don't you say you'd rather not have Irish stew if you don't like it?"

"I *do* like it," said Owen, gravely.

"Well, then, there!" said Phyllis.

"But I don't like the smell of it."

Phyllis had nearly finished washing her hands before she replied:—

"You can't have Irish stew without the smell, because the smell is part of the stew."

There was not the vestige of a smile on either of their faces.

Then Owen, in all seriousness, made answer:—

"I'd leave that part out."

"If you did," said Phyllis, "it would cease to be Irish stew, and it wouldn't be anything at all."

Shushan did not hear his father's reply because he had slipped into the dining-room and concealed himself behind a heavy curtain. The gong sounded, and presently Owen and Phyllis came into the room.

Phyllis did not look very nice, because she had changed for dinner. She had taken off the pretty frock in which she had paid her calls. Nor can it be said that Owen looked up to much. He had not combed his hair and he was wearing a perfectly horrid old pair of slippers which went clip-clop as he walked. And the dinner was nothing to look at—a pale soup with some vermicelli drowned in it and that Irish stew. The sweet, a blancmange with a stiff celluloid, unloved appearance, stood threateningly upon a side table. Owen had shaken his head at it when he came into the room.

Shushan hated the mould in which that blancmange had stiffened—a wretched formal affair with fluted sides like a section chopped out of a stone pillar. Once he had seen a lovely mould of a pigeon sitting on a nest, but, ignorantly, his mother had refused to buy it. She did not know how much nicer things tasted when they looked jolly.

The trouble was that his mother and his father had lost or mislaid their sense of humour, and many of their other senses were atrophied on that account. It was very careless of them, because they had started married life with a first-rate equipment, loving each other and joking with each other like anything. But instead of developing all that they let it slip, and then, of course, it was too much trouble to stoop and pick it up again.

OWEN HILLIARD took his place at the head of the table with a sigh. The table candles were unlit and the gloom of evening dimmed the corners of the room.

Standing upon the sideboard was an unfamiliar object: a silver frame in which was a photograph of a number of persons grouped upon a lawn.

"What's that?" Owen demanded, and pointed a spoon bearded with vermicelli.

Phyllis finished her soup, turned, put out her hand, and brought the photograph frame towards her.

"Why," she exclaimed, "if it isn't our wedding group!"

Shushan pricked his ears to catch his father's reply. It came:—

"What on earth made you take out my aeroplane photograph of the Monchy trench system and put that thing back?"

"I didn't; and will you have some more soup?" said Phyllis.

"I can't eat what I've got; then someone did," said Owen, all in one breath.

"I haven't seen it for years," said Phyllis. "Quite five years. It must be five years since you took it out of the frame and put that trench thing in instead, which isn't half so pretty."

Owen said:—

"I did not take it out. I covered it up.

That trench thing, as you call it, is a view of where I spent most of the war."

"The wedding group is where we spent our wedding day—at Uncle Peter's," said Phyllis.

"If that Monchy photograph is lost I shall never be able to repeat it."

"Well, if this were lost we couldn't repeat it," said Phyllis, "especially as Uncle Peter is dead and the house has been let to a Mrs. Hinchcliffe."

"My dear Phyllis, you do seem to say the most tiresome things," Owen sighed.

"No, I don't," she answered. "It wouldn't be any easier to take another wedding group than to have another war."

The conversation had hardly taken the turn Shushan had hoped for; on the other hand, he had started them talking, which was a step in the right direction.

"It must be found and returned," said Owen, "and I'd like to know who had the impudence to move it."

AND then Shushan slipped from behind the curtain.

"Daddy and Mummy," he said, and struck a most affected pose. "It was my surprise for you. I meant no harm."

Word for word he reproduced a sentence used by Brian with capital results against the stony hearts of Al and Nell. In fairness, it must be admitted that he was deeply ashamed of saying such a thing, and only a sure conviction of good to come persuaded him to do so.

"Is this child suffering from a touch of the sun, or is he trying to be funny?" Owen demanded.

"Not either," Shushan replied, "but I have changed a gweat deal since this morning. I've changed for the better." And retreating behind the curtain he released a very small kitten from captivity beneath an inverted paper basket and, holding it to his cheek, peeped forth, with an angelic smile, upon his dumbfounded parents.

Phyllis was first to speak.

"Shushan," she said, "where did you get that cat?"

The direct nature of the question did not admit of a romantic reply.

"I had to borwow it," said Shushan.

"*Had* to borrow it!" Owen repeated. "In Heaven's name, why did you *have* to borrow a cat?"

Shushan floundered.

"Well, you see—I don't 'zactly know—except—that I wanted to be kind to some animal."

The last part of the sentence went with a run.

Owen Hilliard looked at his wife in genuine anxiety.

"Phyllis," he said, "you'd better ring up Dr. Hall straight away."

"No, please, Mummy," said Shushan, as Phyllis laid her napkin on the table. "Please, I am all wite. I only want to stop here wiv you and dear Daddy."

"If this goes on," exclaimed Owen, "I shall be sick in a minute. Send him off to bed at once."

But Phyllis was not at all sure.

"I think, Owen, we had better let him stay—just a little while."

"I'll be as good as good," murmured Shushan, in the voice of a dove.

Owen was on the point of saying something, but Phyllis silenced him with a gesture.

"Sit on that stool, darling," she told Shushan.

And Shushan, who hadn't been called darling for ever and ever so long, was so inflated with success that he determined to fight on to the last gasp.

"Owen, if you aren't going to finish your soup, I'll ring for it to be taken away."

An uncomplimentary remark from Owen on soups in general and this soup in particular afforded Shushan the opportunity to play his first court card.

"When love falls out of a window there are gener'ly complains 'bout the cookin'."

"My stars and all green stuff!" shouted Owen, and leapt to his feet.

Phyllis said "Shush!" because at that moment Annie was coming in with the Irish stew, and although they had dropped any pretences with each other they still carried on an illusion before the servants. Shushan was the only one to speak while Annie was in the room, and that was to say:—

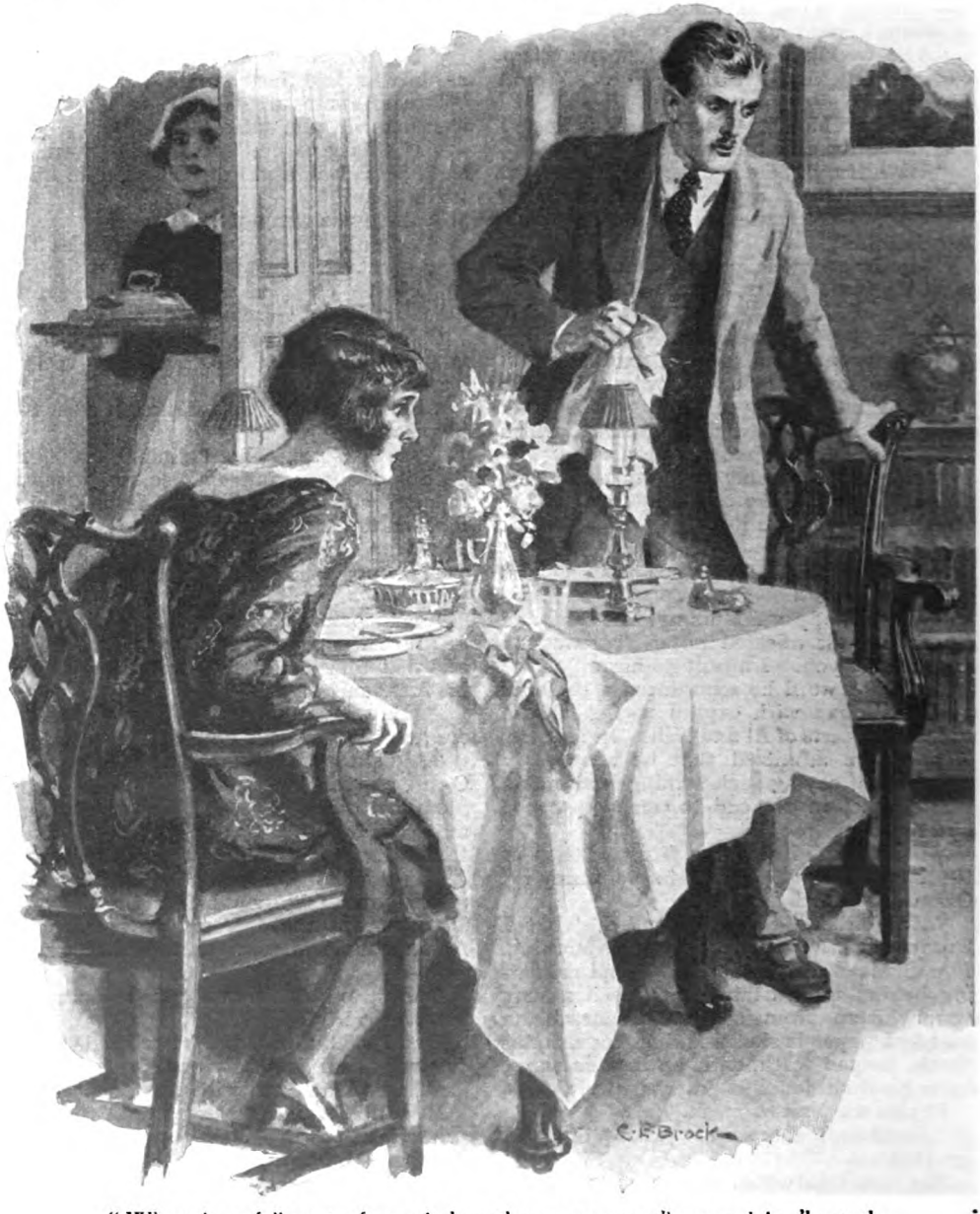
"How pretty Mummy is! Isn't she pretty, Daddy?"

Owen said nothing, but with dexterity deserving of a better cause he flicked Shushan's bare knee with his table napkin.

It would be untrue to pretend that this corrective gesture caused any physical pain to Shushan, and even had it done so he was too much of a stoic to complain. On the other hand, it revealed to him the very arduous nature of the task he had set himself. Five assaults of sweetness had he launched and not one had met with success. Almost before the door closed behind the retreating Annie, he found his stomach rising convulsively towards his breast-bone in the first of a long series of dry sobs. From Phyllis came the startled inquiry:—

"Shushan, Shushan, what *is* the matter?"

But Shushan could not longer command the powers of speech, and his exit from the room, the palm of a hand pressed over his



"When love falls out of a window there are gener'ly complains 'bout the cookin'," said Shushan.

"My stars!" shouted Owen, and leapt to his feet.

mouth and his eyes bulging, was not the least remarkable of his evening's performances.

Phyllis rose to follow, but Owen checked her.

"He is either playing some elaborate joke," said he, "or suffering from hysteria. In either case better leave him alone for a bit." And then, because a man must vent his perplexity in one way if not in another, he added explosively, "Damnation take these onions."

Phyllis dropped her knife and fork and stared in amazement. It was not Owen's habit to swear—he did not feel anything acutely enough.

"Oh!" she gasped. "Oh! You swore at me!"

"Nothing of the kind," said Owen. "You are not an onion, are you?"

"Brute, brute!" exclaimed Phyllis, and for the first time for years an angry flush mounted to her cheeks. "Brute, how dare you?"

"Dare I what?"

"Call me an onion."

"I did not—you called yourself an onion."

"And now you're accusing me of being mad?"

"Who is?"

"You are. No one who wasn't mad would call herself an onion."

Owen tossed his head from side to side.

"Now you are off," he cried.

Phyllis sprang to her feet, scarlet, quivering.

"Finish it," she gasped, "finish it—it doesn't matter that I'm your wife—it doesn't matter how vulgar you are to me. Finish it."

"Finish what?" Owen's voice had risen to the top storey—the very attics of indignation.

"The beastly common phrase you were going to use—off my onion you were going to say—off my onion."

And then Owen Hilliard did an unbelievable and unpardonable thing. Seizing the silver entrée dish in which was piled the Irish stew, he flung the whole boiling lot through the open French windows on to the lawn.

For a long minute husband and wife confronted one another like rival generals on a battlefield. At last——

"There!" said Phyllis. "It's gone."

She was right, too, for a couple of prowling dogs, catching the scent, had fallen to upon the scattered repast with relish.

"It's gone," she repeated. "There's nothing else to eat."

And she was right again, for the larder was as empty as their two mirthless souls.

"I don't care," said Owen.

Phyllis drew herself up.

"So you are the kind of man I have married," said she. "And to-morrow is our wedding day."

With superb dignity she walked towards the door, stopped, lifted the blancmange from the side table, and with the words: "You are not to be trusted with this," passed from the room.

Owen Hilliard sank back in his chair with a look of absolute bewilderment upon his face.

CARRYING the blancmange as though it were a head upon a charger, Phyllis mounted the stairs to her own bedroom and turned the key in the lock.

Of course, what had happened had been terribly upsetting and without precedent, and yet she did not actually resent it. It was so long since she and Owen had had a row that the experience was refreshing. She was ruffled, of course, and indignant, and, of course, had not the slightest intention of speaking another word to Owen that night; but there had been something novel and exhilarating about the whole affair, as though a depth charge had exploded beneath the stagnant surfaces of their married lives. Owen's gesture and his precision in throwing out the Irish stew had been superb. She had forgotten that he was capable of such vital action.

From beneath her window came the crack-crack of a dog's teeth crunching into bone. The sound, and perhaps the unexpectedness of what had just happened, informed Phyllis that she was hungry—very hungry—distressingly hungry. Dignity made it impossible to return to the dining-room in search of a crust, but the desire for nourishment was paramount. It was then that, looking down, she became aware of the blancmange, white and pure, balanced upon her knees. By no means was blancmange the kind of food of which she was in need. Her palate, long inured to a flavourless diet, now was crying out for something tasty—a *mousse* of ham with pistachio—a point steak enriched with *pâté de foie gras*—but it was evident that such delicacies were unobtainable. It must be the blancmange or nothing. There was no spoon, but as an effective substitute Phyllis made use of an ivorine shoe-horn.

At the third mouthful she shook her head despondently. The wretched blancmange had even less flavour than the shoe-horn; in fact, it tasted very much like the shoe-horn, only more so. Responding to an absurd impulse, she splashed over it a few drops of *eau-de-Cologne*. After which, even the dog on the lawn would have refused to eat it.

With a sigh Phyllis set it aside, kicked off her shoes, undressed, and got into bed. It was ages and ages since she had gone to bed by daylight—not since she was a child. She frowned at the ceiling and her thoughts began to ramble. Presently she sat up in bed and reached out for a hand mirror.

"It's still quite a young face," she told herself, "but——"

But what? A little dull and blancmangy? Well, perhaps. She tried to make it smile, but it had got out of the habit of smiling, and the effort only made it look as if it were going to cry. But it wasn't used to crying either. She tucked the mirror under her pillow and frowned and wished she could go to sleep.

"That bothering old strip of light sky," said Phyllis. "I wish it would go out."

A childish device for shortening the day flashed across her memory. Clasping the pillow to her breast she dived under the sheets, and presently, after a deal of scrambling and burrowing, her head emerged at the foot of the bed.

"And now," she said, "when I get out of bed to-morrow, I'll get out on the wrong side—or will it be the right side, and have I been getting out on the wrong side ever since Owen and I had separate rooms?"

Her last conscious thought was a wish that she had brought up the picture of the wedding group instead of the blancmange.

When Annie came into the dining-room to "take away" she found two clean plates—an empty salver—and no sweet.

"Well, good gracious!" said she, being a country girl. "Where can everything have gorn?"

But Owen did not feel able to reply. He stepped out into the garden, tightly clasping the kissing-crust of a cottage loaf of bread.

OWEN had a theory that he thought better if he walked. There was, in fact, little foundation for this belief, but that evening, accompanied by a sense of emergency, he walked for miles. He felt that an assault had been made against his citadel, but how and by whom he was unable to determine. He was so long unaccustomed to investigating the mysteries of his own home that in trying to make the attempt he found, metaphorically, that the shutters were up. There was not the slightest explanation of his son's conduct nor why, in the course of a perfectly formal domestic discussion, he and Phyllis should have quarrelled so violently. He had no misgivings as to his own behaviour. He had demonstrated in a practical way that he was not a man to be trifled with. On reflection he was bound to admit that he stood very well with himself. He had put a stop to an absurd conversation by pitching the victuals on to the lawn. He decided that nothing could be fairer than that, until a small voice inquired within, "But why put a stop to absurd conversations? Why not welcome them? In the old days you earned a reputation for talking through your hat." Yes, that was true. One way and another, he had produced some startling fancies out of his

hat—fancies which had made Phyllis quite ill with laughter.

But what had become of Phyllis's laughter? No good being funny if nobody laughs—no good laughing if nobody is funny.

Was it possible that between them they had lost something worth having?

Owen Hilliard frowned deeply, and to escape the dark misgivings that were dogging his self-satisfaction he broke into a run.

His slippered feet on the dew-drenched grass of the hillside beat a maddening measure.

Apathy—apathy—apathy——

Owen Hilliard tried to sing something against the time.

"'I want to be apathy,
But I can't be apathy
Unless I make you apathetic too——'

"This is all rot," said he.

When he arrived home, he tiptoed upstairs, but Phyllis's door was locked, and with an impatient jerk of the shoulders he turned aside and entered his own room. Usually so precise in the minutest details, Owen scattered the floor with his various articles of apparel.

No one had peeped into the nursery to kiss Shushan good night.

SHUSHAN was dressing himself next morning, when he overheard his parents carrying on a desultory conversation through the wall that separated their two rooms.

The voices were very much on guard, and, realizing that this was so, Shushan, who had practically determined to abandon his campaign, made up his mind to give it one more run.

Phyllis was first to speak, and from the long intervals between her questions and his answers Shushan assumed that his father was not only dignified, but was shaving.

Something like this it went:—

"Owen?"

"Yes."

"Are you getting up?"

"I am—getting up."

"Oh."

"Why?"

"Nothing." A pause. "But, if you are awake, I thought you might have said something."

"Said what?"

"Even if you have forgotten it's our wedding day, you might have said 'White Rabbits,' because it's the first of the month too."

With a sense of increasing alarm, Owen realized that it was no ordinary Phyllis who spoke the words.

"I haven't necessarily forgotten anything," he replied, warily.

"Yes, you have."

"If you say I have there's nothing more to it."

It was the voice of a man conscious of a logical superiority. From Phyllis's room came a suffering moan, similar to the lowing of cattle.

"Mooooo."

It shook Owen's nerve rather badly.

"What's the matter? Why did you lock your door? I'll say 'White Rabbits' if you want me to—but it's so damn' silly."

Phyllis stopped mooing abruptly.

"I don't *want* you to do anything. I don't even *want* you to have bought some flowers for my wedding day."

A stab of conscience checked Owen's reply. After all, he might have bought a few flowers for the occasion. He wished he had. Forgetfulness is so shabby when it is misunderstood.

"As a matter of fact——" he began.

"Oh, please don't explain——"

"If I had got some flowers, I suppose I should have had to push them through the keyhole—not much inducement to——"

And suddenly he became aware of Shushan standing at the door, beating his little red mouth with a quivering forefinger and beckoning him furiously with the other hand.

"Now, understand me, my lad," said Owen, "if you are going to start any more of that last night's business you're for it."

But the courage of desperation was upon Shushan, and, seizing his father by the sleeve of his dressing jacket, he dragged him from the room.

"What is it? What's the meaning of all this?" Owen demanded.

"I knew you'd forget, so I buyed some," whispered Shushan.

"Bought some what?"

"A' least, I said you'd pay for 'em."

"Pay for what and bought what?"

Shushan dropped his voice to a whisper.

"Flowers."

"Look here," Owen began, frowning deeply, "I don't know what fool game you're up to, but——" He paused. "Have you really bought some flowers?"

Shushan nodded.

"Mos' lovely ones."

Owen scratched his head.

"It's infernal cheek," said he, "but in the circumstances—not unfortunate."

He fumbled in his trousers pocket, produced half a crown, and pressed it into his son's hand.

"Oo," said Shushan.

In the middle of it all Shushan joined the chorus with a wail so piercing as to outrival all the other competitors.

"But I think it would be better to let Mummie think they came from me. Understand?"

In the rapture of conspiracy with his own father, plus half a crown, Shushan's heart was too full for words.

"That's all right," said Owen. "Step downstairs, old fellar, and put 'em on the breakfast table."

Promoted to "old fellar" Shushan clattered downstairs with a whoop of joy to where the cardboard box was concealed in a boot cupboard.

Owen Hilliard was standing at his wife's door when she unlocked it and came out.

They were both embarrassed, and it was only with great difficulty Owen managed to say:—

"I think it was unfair of you to assume I had forgotten our wedding day."

"You had forgotten," she replied.

"As it happens, I had not forgotten." He was very stately. "You will find the proof that I had remembered on the breakfast table."

Phyllis looked at him with suspicion.

"Though I must say," Owen added, "the pleasure of doing a thing is rather lessened if one is prompted about it."

"I suppose that means," said Phyllis, "that you've been out in the garden tearing up a handful of forget-me-nots."

"It means nothing of the kind. I hope that even you will think what I have done is adequate to the occasion."

"I hope I shall," was the guarded reply, as Phyllis led the way downstairs.

WHEN they entered the dining-room they were walking abreast. Shushan, quivering with suppressed excitement, stood on one leg by the sideboard.

Before his mother's place, occupying nearly half the breakfast table, was an immense wreath of white lilies and carnations.

Phyllis took one glance and her jaw dropped.

"You pig—oh, you pig!" she cried.

For a breathless second Owen Hilliard looked like a pillar of salt. Then his passion broke loose.

"You young rip!" he shouted. "A wreath—a wreath!"

"A wreath," Phyllis echoed. "Yes. You are right—adequate to the occasion—and so it is—for our love is dead—dead."

She abandoned herself to a veritable torrent of tears.

"Phyllis. It's a lie. I never did this thing. Phyllis, I swear." Owen Hilliard had lost all control of himself. "I never bought you any flowers—I know nothing about it. I'd completely forgotten our wedding day—honestly, my darling—Phyllis—why, heavens alive——"

And in the middle of it all Shushan Hilliard joined the chorus with a wail so piercing as to outrival all the other competitors.

"Aouh! Aaouh! I done it—I done it! 'Cos I—aaoouuh!"

Stunned by the volume of Shushan's grief, his parents were silenced.

"Because what?" Owen thundered.

But it was five minutes before Shushan could control himself sufficiently to explain.

Two shillings — pictures — mother and father like them, and a child who led them "out of darkness into the dominions of love."

This last was a caption.

"'Ven — I — fort — of the flowers — and went to—buy some—and the weath was p-p-pwettiest."

"But why did you do all this, darling?" said Phyllis, with such grave eyes upon her little son.

"'Cos you see in the end they was nicer to Brian and buyed him a toy—a gweat woolly lamb—silly rotten thing. I'd like a ship."

Owen was blowing his nose. He said:—

"Shushan, slip upstairs and get me a hank. And don't bother to bring it down. I'll come and fetch it myself—presently."

Then husband and wife looked at each other.

"Well, I'm sure I don't know, do you?" said he.

And she answered:—

"I believe I do, Owen."

So he kissed her.

And after that they went into the garden and dug a grave to bury the past. And in it they put Owen's clip-clop slippers and the dress that Phyllis hadn't looked very nice in. And just as Owen was going to put back the earth, Phyllis said:—

"Wait a minute."

She ran into the house and came back with what was left of the blancmange—and that was buried too.

The wreath looked awfully nice on the top of it all.

And then—but who would believe the silly times and places in which folks re-find their sense of humour?—they burst out laughing—and started to shout for Shushan.

THESE THRILLING ARTICLES ARE FACT—NOT FICTION.

Cases from My Crime-Book

By

H. ASHTON-WOLFE

(Interpreter at the Criminal Courts.)

Illustrated by
F. E. HILEY

AUTHOR'S NOTE

My profession as interpreter has brought me constantly in touch with the great criminal investigation centres of the world, and I have many times become intimate with some of the more interesting criminals of modern times.

The stories which I have selected for this series can be found in the official records, only one or two details having been rearranged in order to avoid giving pain and reopening old wounds.

I have myself taken part either in the investigation or the final trials of the criminals. Several of the cases I have specially selected because of the ingenuity displayed both by the law-breakers and by the investigators.

No III. THE SCENTED DEATH

THROWING his hat, which resembled a Western sombrero, across the room, my friend Bannister sank down into a chair.

"Can I talk to you?" he asked. "There's a wonderful crime just been committed, and I'm anxious for you to help me. Could you get away from your microscopes and cameras for a few days?"

"Sure!" I answered, for I knew he loved this Americanism. "When *you* call a crime *wonderful*, it must be worth investigating, but I shall have to obtain permission from my Chief first."

"All fixed," Bannister grinned cheerfully. "I knew you'd say 'yes,' so I saw Dr. Bertillon as I came up, and he is quite willing to let you take a hand. I believe it's our dear friend the Spider again."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed. "Hanoi Shan? Why, he is either dead or hiding in South America."

"Oh, no, he is not! Dupuis the *mouchard* (police spy) swears he saw one of his men, Gustave—you remember Gustave?—two days ago, loitering about near the entrance to the Conciergerie, where the prisoners for the assizes arrive for trial. Don't forget that to-morrow is the trial of Larue, one of the last men caught when we

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rounded up the gang of the Rue Lhomond. You know Shan, he never leaves his men to their fate. It is one of his principles always to help them. Do you know who is defending this common penniless Apache? Labord himself, and that means a fee of at least two thousand francs; where did Larue get this money from—eh?"

I was dumbfounded. Maitre Labord was one of the greatest criminal lawyers of Paris. This certainly looked as if friends of Shan, at any rate, were coming to the rescue of Larue.

If Shan himself was still alive and, what would be infinitely worse, in Paris, we might expect a terrible epidemic of crime once more.

That horrible little Asiatic! Little, I say, although it was only because his body had been so unbelievably crushed and trampled by the rogue elephant that he was now shrunken and small. Once the Spider must have been a tall, fine man. No doubt, too, that the terrible encounter had warped his brain and made him a criminal monomaniac, for until that moment Shan had been the governor of a province, esteemed and liked by all. The eminent surgeons, whom he came to Paris to consult, would have done well to have recognized this latent insanity and so saved the world much suffering. The subtlety and profound knowledge of Shan made him the most dangerous criminal in Europe.

WHILST I thus mentally reviewed our last battle with Hanoi Shan, at the Rue Lhomond, Bannister had approached my table. On it were some photographs. Putting his hand on my shoulder, he stooped over me to examine them. As he did so an intense feeling of irritation came over me, almost a desire to strike, or even to wound my friend, while at the same time a subtle and strange odour assailed my nostrils. With a snarl I threw his hand off and sprang up. I felt dizzy and unhappy. Bannister's cheerful nod only annoyed and intrigued me.

"What is it?" I asked. "I—I feel ill."

Something about Bannister puzzled me; he looked like a man trying an experiment.

"It's all right, my dear fellow; smell this and you'll understand! It has to do with the case in which I want your help."

So saying, he threw a fine linen handkerchief into my hand. A most horrible perfume came from it.

Sweet it was, and seductive, yet at the same time—how shall I describe it? Only those who have inhaled the peculiar odour of the white orchid, called by the natives of Borneo the Hai Tang, will know what I mean. As I held the piece of linen near my face, waves of sound filled my ears, the familiar room disappeared, and in its place scenes of violence, like streamers of mist, passed before my eyes. All the deeds of bloodshed in history seemed to surround me, and a mad desire to kill invaded my nerves and brain.

WITH a start I came to myself, to find that Bannister had snatched the handkerchief away and was watching me tensely.

"Well, what do you think of it, eh?" he said. "Made you feel as if you wanted to murder me, didn't it? And yet we've been pals for years."

"Yes," I answered. "I felt like running amok. The thing is vile. It's poisoned. Though what the poison is I don't know. Perhaps Lebrun will be able to analyse it."

With a shudder I picked up the kerchief with a pair of tweezers and placed it in a glass jar, screwing the lid down tightly.

"Now tell me about it," I said to my friend. "This is diabolical. What has happened, and where was it found? Certainly no European uses such poison. As you say, it looks very much as if our friend Hanoi Shan is again active."

"Yes; not for nothing is he nicknamed 'L'Araignée' (the Spider). He plots and weaves, others carry out the deeds of violence his twisted brain conceives. I see that you have enlarged the finger-prints found on the club with which Dr. Leon Combat was killed. Have you found whose they are?"

I shook my head.

"Unknown, eh?" Bannister continued, "Well, as you may remember, I was present at the investigation. No clue of any kind, but a faint smell, very faint, the same, I believe, which now comes from that piece of linen, was floating about the room in which the body lay. I should never have remembered it, if I had not found this thing to-day," and he pointed to the jar in which was the handkerchief.

"Mme. Combat has since been sent to the Château d'Orly and declared insane. The shock produced by the discovery of her husband's body is the probable cause, the doctors say. I rather think that *she* killed him, under the influence of that same poison. Well, then there is the murder of Mme. Laroche and the theft of her priceless jewels. Again no arrest has followed. Dr. Regimbaud was the first to find her. He speaks in his report of a most nauseating odour pervading the house. Then there is the Steinheil case, husband and mother dead, but no proof against anyone. Now, to-day, Van Bromen."

"What," I shouted, "Van Bromen dead?"

"Yes," Bannister replied. "This morning Van Bromen, the Dutch-American diamond merchant, was discovered dead in his flat, and, according to his clerk, diamonds worth one million francs, a recent consignment from Amsterdam, are probably missing. We have not yet opened the safe. In the flat I found that thing." Again he pointed to the jar.

"As you know, I have several times had occasion to visit Van Bromen, acting on orders from Pinkerton's in New York. Yesterday I received a cable from our American headquarters, asking me to see Van Bromen at once. So it was that I arrived this morning just as the door had been broken down by his servants.

"The room presented some curious points: although I, too, should feel convinced, as the investigating judge, who has made a first rapid examination already does, that it is a case of suicide, if it were not for that handkerchief, which was tightly clutched in the dead man's hand. I said nothing about it to anyone. I also persuaded M. Dufresne to allow me to investigate for myself and to co-operate with the Sûreté men. Come along, therefore, and bring your instruments. We must hurry, though, for if the *juge d'instruction* thinks it is suicide, they may unwittingly destroy valuable traces."

I JUMPED up eagerly; this was interesting indeed.

"Wait, though," I said, reluctantly taking the handkerchief from the jar again and spreading it out on a sheet of paper. "Let us examine this first."

It was a square piece of linen of fine quality. A man's handkerchief. In a corner was the monogram H.V.B. I pointed this out to Bannister; Van Bromen's, evidently.

Bannister nodded. "I found it in his outstretched hand."

Near the centre was a circular dirty mark!

Taking up a powerful magnifying glass I looked attentively at this, covering my mouth and nose with a piece of cotton-wool.

"I think a glass or a tumbler has been cleaned with it," I said, "and it is from this round stain that the uncanny smell appears to come. Perhaps Van Bromen drank some sort of poison and tried to wipe the glass."

I measured this mark very carefully.

A further examination showed that the piece of linen had been crumpled and held in the hand for some time, for marks of perspiration were plainly visible under the lens. Replacing it cautiously in the jar, I rose to follow Bannister, but before leaving I telephoned for Lebrun, the clever chemist attached to the Paris Sûreté, and asked him to come to my laboratory at once.

I had hardly finished dressing for the street when he entered.

I explained the effect of the poisoned linen and saw him carry it away with relief. The thing was a horror, but if the poison was known, then Lebrun would classify it.

OUTSIDE, a car was waiting, and we were soon on our way to No. 9, Boulevard Malesherbes, where Van Bromen had lived. Although the body was only discovered that morning the second edition of the *Intransigeant* had already published a long flamboyant article about it, adding many imaginary details. Naturally a crowd surrounded the house, which was near the Madeleine church.

Van Bromen's flat was on the third floor.

In the ante-chamber and dining-room nothing out of the ordinary was to be noticed, but when we entered the dead man's study and library the drawn curtains and stale odour gave an instant impression of tragedy. Many objects had been thrown about, smashed, broken, and destroyed.

Some valuable paintings of the early Dutch school had even been ruthlessly ripped from their frames.

One would imagine that in this room of grim happenings a frantic search for something minute had taken place. The curtain had been drawn from before the door of a safe in the wall, and lying in front of this, face downwards, was the unfortunate Van Bromen.

I at once began my work; photographs were taken from various angles, a measured screen being placed inside the camera, which, when the plates are developed, gives an exact scale of the size of the scene.

All portable objects likely to have been touched were carefully placed in special cases, so that nothing came in contact with their surface. They were then removed to the Sûreté laboratory. The medical officer now came, and together we very carefully turned the body over. For the moment he merely scrutinized the lips and eyes, also the finger-nails. On the table was a small box with a medical syringe, and a bottle containing a colourless fluid. Neither had been touched until then. Lifting up the bottle by the rim with a special instrument, the doctor poured a drop of the liquid into his hand. A rapid test proved it to be a strong solution of morphine. An overdose of this, injected under the skin of the left forearm, where a red puncture was visible, had evidently caused Van Bromen's death.

"Suicide," the medical expert said, shrugging his shoulders. "Very banal, this case; quite uninteresting."

I looked attentively at the mark, covering my mouth and nose with a piece of cotton-wool.

This was also the opinion of M. Colbert, the Sûreté officer in charge of the investigation.

Luckily he was a good friend of mine, so that he did not object to my further examination, but he laughed at the trouble I was taking.

"*Eh bien*, you are wasting your time, *mes amis;* you hear what the doctor says. Besides, the door was locked and bolted on the inside, and no one but poor Van Bromen in the room when it was forced. However, M. Bannister has often helped us, and if he wishes you to do this, why, all right."

Thus encouraged I continued my task. Bannister and I knew of the handkerchief, whilst he did not.

I felt certain that, could we but discover a proof that someone else had been in the room before the door was opened, we should be able to convince the Sûreté that it was a crime and not suicide. All my efforts were directed to this end.

In the hope that the murderer had left the imprint of his fingers somewhere I tested and photographed every smooth surface where a hand could have rested.

Bannister and I then examined the room itself.

It was a large oblong chamber with a very high ceiling.

There was only one window, which was of the usual French type, locking by the turning of a central handle which operated a sliding bar at the top and bottom. This was closed, and, besides being on the third storey, looked out on the street. No one could have entered or escaped that way.

The safe now claimed our attention. It was shut, but two clear finger-marks appeared on the massive knob when I sprayed it with a special coloured powder.

M. Colbert had sent to the makers for a man to open it, as no memorandum of the combination had been discovered, although a search had been made for it in the pocket-book and among the papers of the diamond dealer.

Would it be empty or should we find the diamonds still there?

The servants were now called one by one and questioned.

Van Bromen had been alone in his study all the preceding afternoon. Only an

employé of the telephone service had called towards five o clock, because the bell of the instrument in the study was giving trouble. The valet had let him in, but did not know when he went, as he had been ordered by his master to go to Versailles with an important letter.

The butler, Charles, who besides the cook and the valet, Gustave, were the only servants Van Bromen kept, stated that he conducted the man Gustave had passed on to him to his master's study, and had seen him start to work on the telephone.

M. Van Bromen had appeared quite normal; he was busy writing, and on these occasions never liked to be disturbed. It was then about five-thirty p.m.

Charles had already requested permission that morning to be allowed to go to a servants' dinner and ball, for which an invitation had arrived the day before. He left shortly afterwards. Before leaving, he had looked in to see if anything further was wanted, and was then informed that M. Van Bromen was himself going out to dinner, according to his habit on Thursdays, and that the cook need not trouble about him that evening. At that moment the man sent by the Post Office was calling the exchange for a test.

No noise had been heard by the neighbours during the evening, and it was only the next morning, when the valet went to his master's room as usual to call him, that he found the bed still untouched and his master's evening clothes lying on the chair, where he had placed them in readiness the day before. Alarmed, and vaguely sensing evil, Gustave had gone to the study. The door was locked on the inside and no answer came to his repeated knocking. Joined by the butler, he had called in a *sergent de ville* (a policeman), and broken open the door. The first thing they saw was the unfortunate Van Bromen lying dead before the safe.

The policeman tried to telephone to the nearest hospital, but did not succeed in getting the exchange, and thereupon he had suddenly become unaccountably angry and had rushed out of the room, nearly knocking the butler over.

WHILST these statements were being taken down by the *greffier* (the investigating officer's clerk), Bannister and I examined the telephone. This was one of the French table kind, with receiver and microphone in one piece, shaped like the letter C, and which rests horizontally on a double hook.

Lifting this carefully I at once became aware of a vague odour that came from it.

There was no doubt faint traces of the same perfume with which the handkerchief that Bannister had brought to my room was impregnated still lingered on the mouthpiece.

Measuring the round ebonite rim, I found that it corresponded in size to the dirty round stain which I had noticed.

Some subtle and uncanny crime had evidently been perpetrated here. Dimly my friend and I began to sense the truth, but it was no use discussing it as yet.

Outside in the passage were newspaper reporters, and there was nothing we desired less than to let the criminal know that a crime was suspected.

As soon as the judge had finished his examination, he gave orders for the body to be removed for the necessary post-mortem, and we all left together.

At my suggestion, Bannister went to the General Post Office in the Rue du Louvre with the intention of finding out who had been sent to repair the telephone, and what calls had come through to the dead man between five and eight p.m. on the preceding day.

It was arranged that we should meet later at my room and compare results.

WHEN I returned I found Lebrun waiting for me; in his hand was a paper covered with notes.

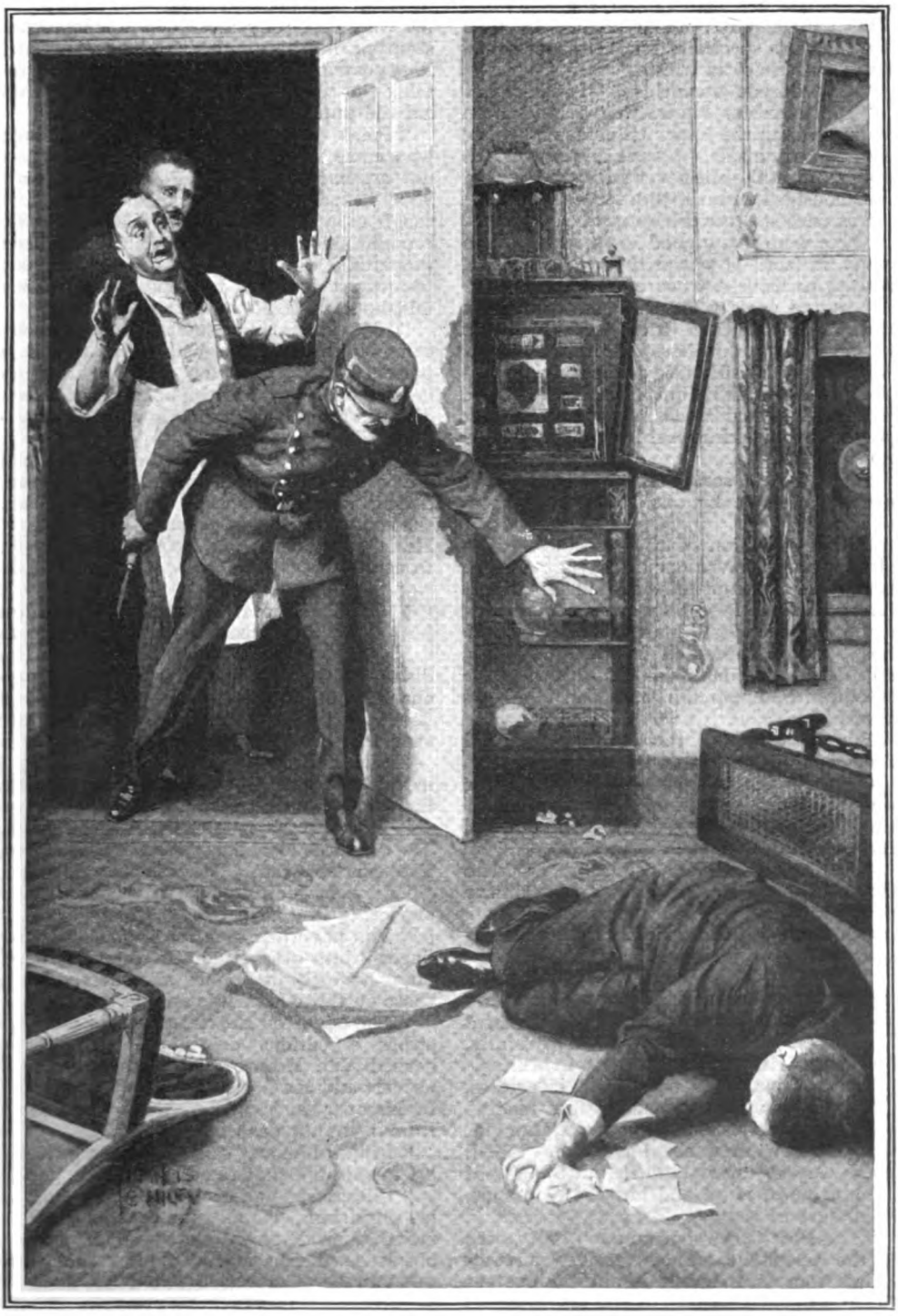
On the table was the jar containing the handkerchief. "*Eh bien*," I said, "have you discovered what it is?"

"No, monsieur," Lebrun answered. "But this is the result of my work. The spot where the poison is strongest has been used to wipe a telephone mouthpiece. There is a distinct reaction for human saliva, such as condenses there from the breath. I also found a few microscopic grains of ebonite, showing that the mouthpiece was new and badly made, since it was rough.

"The saliva is only some twelve hours old. It still reacts to iodine vapour. The odour is probably that of a vegetable oil, but may be from an animal. It is, however, unknown to me. Its effect seems to be a stimulating of that part of the brain which is situated just behind the ears and believed to control our brute instincts. It acts in much the same way as absinthe taken in very large quantities. I imagine that when fresh it will swiftly produce madness, then a state of coma, and perhaps even death."

"*Merci*," I said, smiling. "That is a very fine report, but it does not help much."

"No," said Lebrun, shaking his head, "but, if you will pardon me, I have heard that there is a spider found in Indo-China, a spider as large as a tarantula, which has



The first thing they saw was the unfortunate Van Bromen lying dead before the safe.

the power of giving off a spray or odour when alarmed. This vapour will kill small birds and snakes. When inhaled by man it produces a species of madness, and sometimes even suicidal mania."

"How do you know this?" I inquired.

"Oh, monsieur knows that I have been many years in the East. Of course I believe it to be only a tale. I have never seen this spider, but still—one never knows." Bowing courteously, Lebrun withdrew.

I at once set to work on my negatives.

There were many good impressions. Too many, in fact. It was as if the criminal had desired to leave a trace everywhere.

I waited eagerly for the negatives to fix and wash, and then dried them in haste. It was very unprofessional, and I don't know what Dr. Bertillon would have said had he known of it, but I was eager to see if these lines and circles, so potent in their power and meaning, were all made by the same person.

Soon I had some of them under the microscope—one by one I examined them all.

A dull sensation of cold took possession of my nerves. Was our belief that a crime had been committed all imagination? Every one of those finger-prints had been made by the dead man himself! Again and again I compared them. There was no mistake possible; for I had taken care to obtain clear mouldings of Van Bromen's hands.

Finally, although the hour was late, I could contain myself no longer.

Going to the telephone, I was about to ring up Bannister, when the bell shrilled. Lifting the instrument, I heard the voice of the very man I so much desired to speak to.

"Don't waste time, old fellow," I said to him. "Come along, I've extraordinary news for you."

"So have I," he replied. "I'll be along at once."

AS soon as he arrived I took him to my dark-room and showed him the negatives. He examined them carefully. I then gave him the report of Lebrun.

We sat down in silence and lit cigarettes.

"Well," was his remark, after reading it, "this merely confirms what I thought. Van Bromen may not have been killed, in the way *we* understand it, but Shan is at the bottom of it all and has the diamonds, I feel sure of that.

"The Post Office sent no one at all to see to the telephone. They received a complaint from Van, but it is not the custom in Paris to send as late in the afternoon as that. They have since tested the line and say that nothing is wrong with it. I called at the exchange Gutenberg—Van Bromen's number is connected there—and they tell me that yesterday afternoon someone constantly called his number, from a *café* near by it appears, but as soon as Van Bromen replied the caller rang off. This it was that led the unfortunate man to complain.

"Point one, therefore, is that the man who came, and whom no one saw go, was not an *employé* of the Post Office. Now your Lebrun report speaks of a new and rough mouthpiece. It is probable that he brought this with him, and that it had been prepared with the poison. We'll find out to-morrow how long it is since Van had his telephone installed or changed.

"Now let us suppose that the man who came to see to the instrument placed a poisoned mouthpiece on it. Van Bromen is then called to the telephone. The odour disgusts him and he wipes it with his handkerchief.

"The poison has, however, done its work; a fit of madness seizes the unfortunate man, during which he dashes frantically about the room and breaks most of his furniture. He attempts to reach his safe, but dies in front of it."

"YES," I said, sarcastically. "Then the dead man very obligingly gets up, unlocks the safe, hands the diamonds to the unknown telephone mechanic, lets him out, locks and bolts the door again, injects morphia into his left arm, and lies down to die once more.

"Either that or the diamonds are still in the safe and Van Bromen was alone in the room when he died.

"You cannot ignore the salient facts. The door was locked *and bolted on the inside*. The window, too. There is no cupboard, chimney, or hiding-place in the room, nor any other way in or out.

"You have just seen for yourself that no finger-prints other than those of the dead man have been found anywhere. Even those on the safe handle are his.

"The odour on the handkerchief must be either a curious coincidence or else it caused Van Bromen to commit suicide—Colbert and the doctor are sure that he died by his own hand. Where that poison came from I cannot conceive."

"I think I know," said Bannister, gravely. "I am certain that the diamonds are gone.

"I have seen and spoken with Dr. Poirot, his physician. He tells me that for the last month Van Bromen has been as a man obsessed. Poirot attended him regularly.

"Van Bromen was haunted by the fear of becoming insane! He was in deadly terror of committing a crime, and constantly spoke of fits of homicidal mania, in the

evening especially. When he was alone in his study, reading his letters—*note that: reading his letters*—he was even afraid to ring for his valet, for he felt that the sight of a human being would drive him to frenzy and to murder.

"Several times he spoke of taking his own life, although he had no reason for doing so. We know that Van Bromen was rich, very rich, and his reputation excellent. Does that convey anything to you?

"Constant slow poisoning must have been systematically carried out; we know already that it is a favourite method of Hanoi Shan. That poison came from him."

"How?" I asked.

"Why, his letters, of course; one of them must have carried some trace of the evil drug to him every evening, until he was in such a condition that the final concentrated inhalation from the telephone was sufficient to produce insanity and probably death."

"Then how do you explain the morphia? Even on the box containing the syringe there is the imprint of Van Bromen's thumb. If you are right, then the diamonds were stolen, whilst Van Bromen was committing suicide, and he afterwards bolted the door and shut the safe, leaving only the marks of his own hand. It does not sound probable."

"No, it doesn't. Well, we must wait until to-morrow, then we shall know the result of the medical experts' examination and the safe will also be opened."

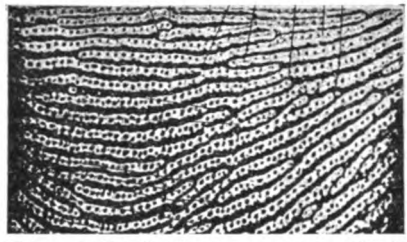
So saying, Bannister rose and wished me good night. I did not go to bed, however, before writing out a long report for my department.

THE next morning I received a note from Dr. Bertillon, asking me to come to him at once.

When I entered his flat on the first floor, I found that Bannister was already there, also M. Colbert.

The latter looked very crestfallen.

"I no longer think that you wasted your time, *mon ami*," he said to me, as I came in. "The safe has been opened. It was empty, although we know now that the consignment of diamonds was there just before four p.m. on the day Van Bromen was killed."



One of Cordoni's finger-prints which we enlarged, showing the tiny orifices through which moisture passes to the fingers. These are counted and show if the print was made by a "live" finger. They are compared with those in the records and make identification inevitable and infallible.

"Was killed?" I said. "Then you have discovered how he died?"

"No," interrupted Bannister. "But we know how he did *not* die. The morphia was injected by someone when poor Van was already dead. A few minutes too late. It was clever, but just not clever enough. The medical report is positive on that point."

"Now, monsieur," said my Chief to me, "let me read your report and then I will see the result of your investigation."

I told my Chief all Bannister and I knew and suspected. Handing him the report I had written before going to bed, I added: "*Hélas*, monsieur, there is not a single trace in all my work that anyone but the dead man has been in the room."

Dr. Bertillon listened gravely without saying a word, and afterwards read my report slowly twice through. For some minutes he was lost in thought; then, rising, he said:—

"*Allons*, messieurs! Let us first see and examine the prints, photographs, and measurements. Also I will look at your poisoned handkerchief. Then, if there is nothing that you may have overlooked, we will go to the Boulevard Malesherbes."

One by one the various photographs were examined. Slowly and methodically he scanned them all. No one spoke. Both Bannister and I felt that the moment was critical.

Suddenly my Chief said:—

"In several of these enlargements I do not see any trace of the sudaripores that are the characteristics of a human finger-print. Give me your microscope."

Again he examined them with my most powerful instrument.

"I am very disappointed in you, M. Ashton-Wolfe," he said at last, turning with a frown. "You have learned, or I thought you had, that the impress of the ridges becomes visible because of the tiny pores in the skin through which the perspiration, the natural moisture of the hand, passes. Of these there are always from one hundred and fifty to two hundred per phalange visible. Here, in these five, there are none at all. Also you have there two finger-marks taken from the handle of the safe, which obviously must be made by one hand, yet they are the impressions of the

first finger of a right hand and the third finger of a left hand. Look for yourself."

Bannister and I said nothing, but through the wave of shame which overcame me at this reproof a flood of wild hope came thrilling. We were right, then; it *was* murder and not suicide.

Together we again examined all our evidence, Dr. Bertillon pointing out what I had missed.

At last he smiled and said: "Well, I am glad it happened; you will not forget the lesson. Come now, we will go, the three of us, to the Boulevard Malesherbes. I see that for the sake of my own reputation as a teacher I must save that of my pupil."

Timidly I asked, "How then, monsieur, were these marks made?"

"Probably gelatine or wax moulds, moistened by breathing on them. For the actual work the murderer must have worn rubber gloves, leaving no trace of his own hands. It remains to be seen whether he wore them *all* the time."

AT the flat of Van Bromen a policeman guarded the door, but he saluted and stood aside when he saw the famous criminologist. Once again in the room, we shut ourselves in.

For an hour Dr. Bertillon examined every surface with powerful lenses, without result. At last he came to a curtain of heavy velvet which was draped before a recess near the door. Here he pointed to marks on one side of it.

"Velvet creases so easily," he said, with a satisfied smile. "Before we do anything else, let us loop the curtain up with a piece of string." When this was done he pointed to the floor.

"Luckily the servants did not dust behind here too often. A man sat behind this curtain for hours. See where the round mark shows in the dust. There is the imprint of his heels—he squatted with his hands clasped around his knees, and here"—with a triumphant gesture he pointed to the complete shape of a hand in the dust—"is where he placed his hand to get up, and steadied himself by placing that same dirty hand on the wall; *and he no longer wore gloves.*

"Naturally, his evil work done—he stripped off the rubber gloves. The wait was a long one, and he probably dozed. When the valet came and knocked, he arose—stiff and cramped—but ready to escape the instant the door was opened. He must have been startled, and the thought never came to him to put on the gloves again.

"Now we have him! To work, *mon ami;* we cannot risk having the marks effaced; you must use magnesium."

When I had finished and we were about to go, Bannister stooped and picked up a small scrap of paper that had been wedged between two floorboards.

This had probably slipped out of the man's pocket whilst sleeping and waiting through the night, shut in with the man he had killed. It would have passed unnoticed but for the brilliant light of the magnesium. On it was a curious cipher:—

"?9; "8:@589: 9½%/½3 rui 43:33."

This had been typed—I had seen the same trick before. It was merely done by locking the shift key for figures and signs, and then writing the required words.

In order to translate it one has only to discover what kind of machine was used and then rewrite it normally.

This we did on returning. The message was:—

"Combination of safe 478 Renee."

The photographs I had taken were at once enlarged and sent to the finger-print department.

Two hours later a messenger from the Sûreté brought us a *fiche* (chart). On it was the following information:—

"Cordoni—Italian—born Naples—French mother—forty years old. Electrician by trade—Four convictions for housebreaking—Wanted." Then followed a long description, likely haunts, friends, etc. More information than we required.

CORDONI! One of Hanoi Shan's lieutenants! Now at last we were on the right track.

"Explanations can wait," Bannister said. "First we must get our man."

We knew that as yet Cordoni and the others, who had apparently remained faithful to Hanoi Shan, would be quite unsuspicious that any foul play was suspected. The papers had all given the doctor's first opinion of suicide as the definite explanation of Van Bromen's death. Good care was taken that nothing of our discoveries leaked out. We knew Shan himself, however, and that he would act as if he were suspected. It was his way.

The police headquarters of all the ports and frontier stations were warned and descriptions circulated. Detectives at once began searching everywhere where diamonds are bought and sold—at Amsterdam, Antwerp, and Hatton Garden in London. The net was stretched for days, but in vain.

Then one evening a long-distance call came from Marseilles. A man answering to the description of Cordoni had been arrested in a *café* near the busy port where the big steamers come in from the East.

Waiting for nothing, Bannister and I

caught the next South-bound express. We arrived at five in the morning and raced to the Commissariat, where the man was held.

It was Cordoni! He had grown a moustache and beard since we last saw him, but we knew him again and he knew us.

He grinned with rage when we entered.

He had evidently intended to travel when he was arrested, for his short, lithe, athletic figure was clothed in elegant tussore silk, such as travellers to the East wear.

"A lot of trouble you take just to have a man arrested for burglary," he snarled at us.

We had gone through the list of things found on the man when he was searched. Several thousand francs in gold and notes had been in his possession, but no diamonds. We guessed, therefore, that he did not for a moment apprehend any trouble from his murderous exploit, and his remark confirmed this. We intended to make the most of his ignorance of our real purpose.

We had to wear him down in order to obtain the information we wanted, for we hoped to find the Spider this time, and we knew beforehand that it would be a long and wearisome tussle.

Cordoni, we were certain, was only a tool.

Police chart or *fiche* taken when Cordoni was convicted for burglary. It was this which we used to track him to Marseilles.

Much has been said about the third degree, but really it is only a battle of wits and will-power. For hours we questioned him, never letting him suspect what we knew. Then suddenly I said:—

"When the door of Van Bromen's flat was broken down, you slipped out from behind the curtain where you had waited.

"We know you put the poisoned mouthpiece on the telephone. We know you injected the morphia when Van Bromen was unconscious. Shan has confessed it. You are a fool to shield him. He says you did it all; it was your idea."

"Liar!" Cordoni yelled, taken off his guard. "Shan is on his way to Suez; he——" Then he stopped, pale and trembling.

I gave him no time to recover. "Suez—rubbish! He told you that, to rob you of your share of the diamonds. He was arrested at Genoa and confessed at once, throwing all the blame on you. Why, he even gave us this note which he sent to you and told us what it means."

With that I showed him a copy of the scrap of paper Bannister had found.

"Come, unless you want to feel the knife of the guillotine on your neck, you will tell us what we want to know. Otherwise Shan will be a witness for the prosecution and you will be sentenced on his evidence."

The sight of the note was the last straw; Cordoni believed that the Spider had been caught; his resistance was at an end. The tale was not long, but it confirmed all that we suspected.

THE SPIDER had only been wounded when we had surrounded and attacked the den in the Rue Lhomond.

He had never left Paris.

Safely hidden in a retreat which he reached by boat, up the River Seine, Hanoi had plotted several crimes from there, which others had carried out with success.

Then, when he was informed of the valuable consignments of diamonds that constantly came to Van Bromen's house, he had conceived a means of obtaining them, at the same time making the crime look like suicide. During several weeks, letters slightly impregnated with a certain juice that Shan possessed (what it was Cordoni did not know, but he believed that it came from the East) had been sent to Van Bromen, until the unfortunate man began to believe that he was becoming insane.

Finally, Thursday, arrangements had been made for the servants to be away the whole evening. Both the invitation to the butler and the letter carried by Gustave were part of the plot. The telephone was then set ringing in order to cause Van Bromen, already irritable and ill, to complain. Cordoni called as an *employé* of the Post Office, and, taking off the mouthpiece, had replaced it by the one Shan had given him. It had been agreed that as soon as Van Bromen was called to the telephone by a bogus message, Cordoni was to lock the door from the inside and hide.

No doubt the poison alone would have killed Van Bromen or caused him to take his own life, but this would not have enabled Shan to obtain the diamonds. Therefore, Cordoni had been ordered to wait in the room until Van Bromen was dead. Shan had told him that the poison on the telephone would kill the victim, but to make quite sure, when he was unconscious, he was to inject morphine into his arm and leave the syringe and bottle where they would be found. He was also given rubber gloves to wear and a series of little gelatine pads with which to touch any likely surface, so as to leave the dead man's finger-prints behind.

Shan had obtained these in his own way; how, Cordoni did not know.

The poisonous emanation did not at once render Van Bromen unconscious. Instead it had stimulated and maddened him. For a long time he had raved and dashed about the room, fighting imaginary enemies. He it was who had smashed the chairs and torn the pictures from their frames, and finally he had fallen down where he was found. Cordoni admitted that he had been terrified lest someone should come, and waited for some time behind the curtain, ready to slip out. At last he had taken heart, and carried out the orders given to him by Shan. The combination of the safe had also been furnished by the Spider.

Then with the parcel of stones in his pocket Cordoni had settled down for his long vigil until the door should be broken open.

This last touch of genius was characteristic of the Asiatic. He had calculated that when the door, which opened inward towards the curtained recess, was forced, the terrified servants would leave it open and give his man a chance to escape; and since their evidence would prove that it had been locked and bolted on the inside, a verdict of suicide would certainly follow.

Cordoni and Shan had taken the train to Marseilles the next day and there they separated. It had been arranged that they should rejoin each other in Shanghai, and share the loot. Shan was too wily to leave such terrible evidence as any of the diamonds with his tool.

As soon as we knew the name of the ship which Shan had taken, we telegraphed to the various authorities.

It had been a close shave, but we were just in time!

When the ship entered the harbour at Naples the Italian police boarded the boat and, forming a cordon, prevented anyone from leaving. There were several Orientals on board and these were all searched. Inside the crown of a pith helmet which one of them, who was a hunchback, was wearing, they found the bag of diamonds. He was immediately arrested and taken to the cells. So at last we had this yellow fiend.

BANNISTER and I left Marseilles the same day for Italy in order to identify Hanoi Shan and to comply with the extradition formalities.

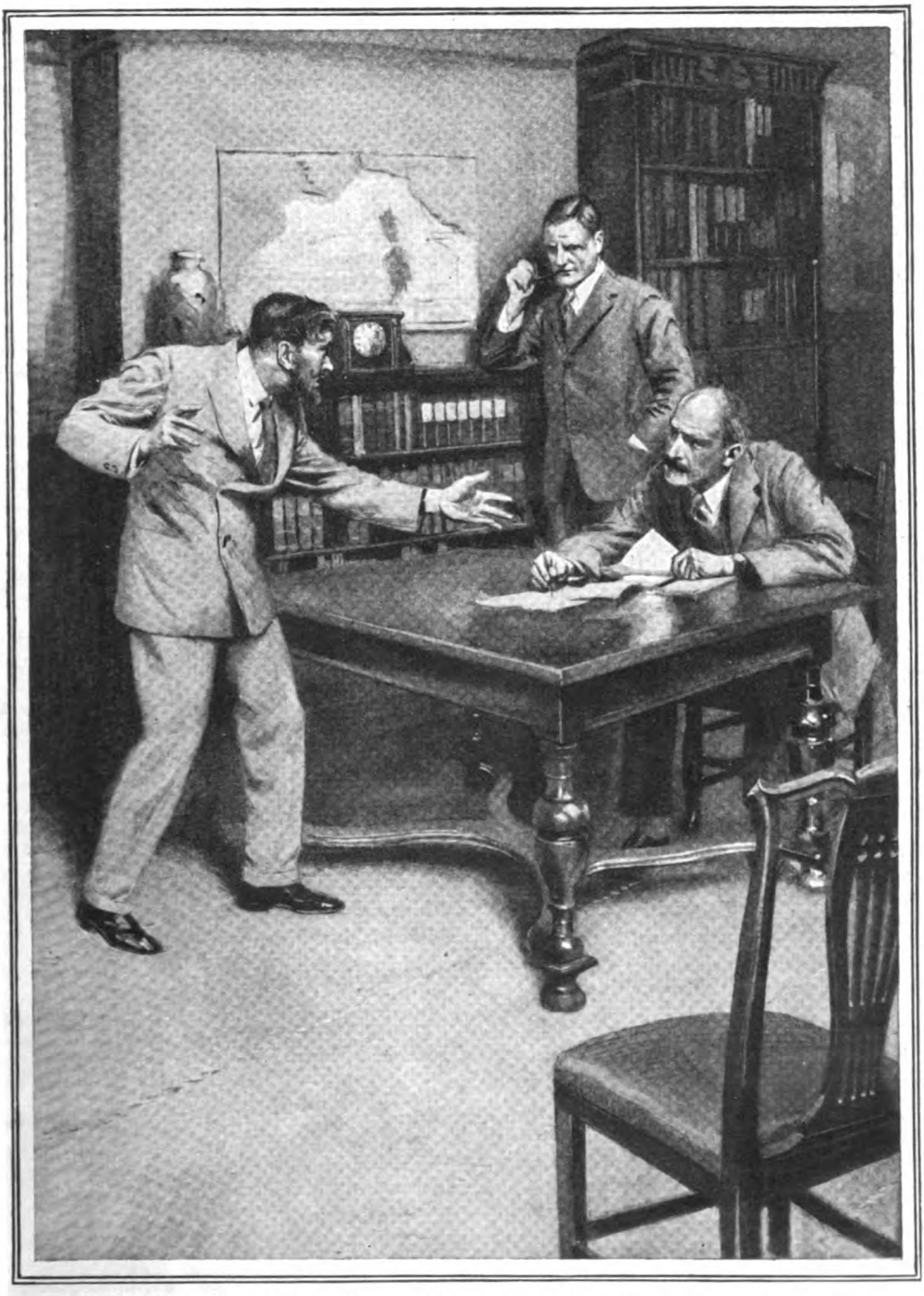
We were both tired out—but bodily fatigue and want of sleep were fully compensated by the satisfaction we felt at having so successfully checkmated the escape and triumph of the Spider and his evil companions. We hoped, too, that with the leader and his helpers under lock and key we should perhaps wring confessions from them which would clear up other unsolved crimes.

We had ample leisure now for twenty hours, whilst the train was rushing along the smiling, sunny Mediterranean coast, to talk over the events of the past few days.

The statement Cordoni had made fully confirmed the results achieved by our patient investigation.

It had been taken down and signed by him before we left and was now in my pocket. With it Bannister and I hoped to force a confession from the wily Shan.

At Genoa a member of the Italian police joined us. We explained the whole case to



"Liar!" Cordoni yelled, taken off his guard. "Shan is on his way to Suez; he——" Then he stopped, pale and trembling.

him. He eagerly listened while I expounded the wonderful work of Dr. Bertillon. When we came to the discovery behind the curtain he stopped me.

"How, then, did Signor Bertillon know that the man had waited there long hours—the marks in the dust would not tell him that?"

"No?" I rejoined. "Well, you see if you can sit in a small recess in a squatting position for many hours and then get up suddenly, without dropping your right knee and hand to the ground to regain your balance. Then you would instinctively reach up with your right hand for a support of some kind above your head in order to pull yourself up. There were all the traces of this. You see, Dr. Bertillon reasoned that the kind of man who commits such a cold-blooded crime is generally an athlete. Had he only been there a few minutes he would have arisen by the strength of his thighs. The Paris Apache has particularly strong legs."

"Si, si," said our Italian friend, "that is true. They fight with their feet, do they not? What you call 'La Savate,' the foot boxing?"

"They do," said Bannister, grinning reminiscently, when I had translated.

"You tell our colleague from Naples that it beats any other kind of fighting."

"Benissimo," the Neapolitan went on, admiringly; "but how small were the mistakes this man made."

"THE greatest mistake was that he did not see what Van Bromen did while he was locking the door," I replied. "Van Bromen wiped the telephone with his handkerchief, thus he did not collapse at once, and the smell, which would have been gone from the hard mouthpiece by morning, remained on the linen clutched in his hand. Otherwise it is probable that we should have all accepted the suicide theory. We should have thought that the diamonds had been hidden or converted by the victim. You see, this Oriental never intended to sell the diamonds in Europe. Probably he knew who would buy them in the East, or even in San Francisco. It was the wiping of the telephone, too, that caused the poison to penetrate the pores of the hand in which Van Bromen clutched the handkerchief—making him dangerously mad for a long time. Thus Cordoni was frightened and did not inject the morphia until too late—when the heart's action no longer distributed it through all the arteries. Finally, the criminal should not have worn rubber gloves—they become so painful after a time; this was what Dr. Bertillon counted upon when he said, 'Let us see if he wore them *all* the time.'"

Thus chatting we arrived at Naples, where a crushing disappointment awaited us.

The man who had been arrested was truly a Malay, but he was not Hanoi Shan. Worse still, he had been taken to the hospital in a dying condition, and never recovered consciousness.

The Italian surgeon informed us that the man had swallowed poison, probably cyanide, at the moment of his capture.

He was quite unknown to us, but must without a doubt have been one of Shan's creatures.

AGAIN the master brain had outwitted everyone by the supreme sacrifice of the diamonds. For it was the finding of these that had satisfied the Italian police that they held the right man; and so allowed Shan to slip away.

Sadly we returned home. We had Cordoni, it is true, and also the diamonds, but Hanoi Shan was still at large.

"Well," said Bannister, sighing, "the third time may be the lucky one—for us. Let us hope so."

Cordoni was tried in Paris and sentenced to lifelong detention in Noumea, the French penal settlement.

Hanoi Shan was finally killed by his own men, because he attempted to defraud them of their share of the huge sum obtained from the underwriters for the salvage of a steamer which they had seized and which was reported to have been found a derelict. Thus, unfortunately, he escaped the well-merited punishment of the guillotine.

The record of the case here described can be found in the *Chronique des Tribunaux*, Paris edition, 1907–1908, under the heading: "Procès de Cordoni—Assassinat de Van Bromen. 3ième Cour d'assizes. Procureur, Archimbaud. Défense, MM. Labord et Henri d'Alberti."

Which means:—

Trial of Cordoni—murder of Van Bromen, 3rd Court of Paris Assizes.

Prosecution conducted by Proc. Archimbaud.

Defence by Maîtres Labord and Henry d'Alberti.

NEXT MONTH:

"ORSINI THE CROUPIER,"

another thrilling article by H. ASHTON-WOLFE.

When the Cock Crew

By

KATHLYN RHODES

Illustrated by
STANLEY LLOYD

THREE men and a girl sat at a little table at the edge of the terrace overlooking the desert; and as they watched the sunset flame in the sky they spoke of beautiful things, of faith and loyalty, and friendship and its obligations.

"For myself," said the girl, slowly, "I could forgive anything more easily than treachery. Friendship, to me, means just that—loyalty."

"Of course!" Roy Prince, the youngest of the three men, spoke eagerly. "No one would ever betray a friend—he'd be a cad if he did."

"Not even to save himself?" Owen Challis asked the question, his steady grey eyes fixed ahead on the shadowy desert. "Life is sweet, you know, and there might come a time when to betray a friend would mean life to oneself, though it might be death for the other chap."

"Oh, no, Mr. Challis!" The girl's voice was assured. "Nothing could justify a friend's betrayal—death would be preferable to a life won by treachery."

Into Challis's quiet eyes leaped suddenly a new light; and the third man of the party, a dark-skinned young Oriental, told himself that surely his English friend valued Miss Loraine's opinion very highly. Before he could follow his thought to its conclusion the girl had turned to him; and he was instantly all courteous attention.

"What do you say, Mahmoud Bey? In your code loyalty holds a high place, doesn't it?"

"You are right, Miss Loraine." His English education was apparent in his fluent speech. "With us men of the East loyalty, fidelity to tradition, to ties of blood, of friendship, is one of the highest virtues. We can forgive many things; in some ways we are more tolerant than you, but an offence against loyalty is unpardonable.'

"And yet I feel always a deep pity for a traitor." Eve Loraine's voice was low. "To me one of the saddest figures in the world's history is the apostle Peter, who, after declaring that he would die for his Lord, denied all acquaintance with him a few hours later."

"'Before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice.'" Owen quoted the words; and the girl looked at the young Egyptian rather shyly.

"You have studied our Bible, haven't you? Then you remember the rest of the story? Peter denied Christ before them all, and"—her voice sank to a whisper—"and 'immediately the cock crew.'"

"A tragedy indeed." The young Bey spoke gently. "Yet, if I have the story right, later the faithless Peter endured martyrdom for the very Friend he had denied."

"Yes, that is the story." She answered him quietly; but before she could say anything more Roy interrupted impatiently.

"Well, what about a cocktail before dinner? It's getting chilly out here."

"Yes, it is unwise to linger after sundown," said Mahmoud, rising as he spoke. "I too must return to Cairo without delay. I have already encroached too long on your kindness, Miss Loraine."

"Not a bit too long, Mahmoud Bey." She smiled on him. "We are always glad to see you. If you must go, will you come and say good-bye to my father? He has some photographs he wishes to show you."

He agreed at once; and when they had gone off, Roy spoke impatiently.

"D'you think it's wise to take so much notice of that native chap? After all, he's not an Englishman, when all's said and done."

"He is a gentleman and the best of good fellows," rejoined Challis, quickly. "I expect if we understood the ramifications of the Egyptian aristocracy we'd find he was at the top of the tree. And so long as

Sir John doesn't object to the friendship, it's not for us to interfere."

Roy turned away brusquely, and Owen, left alone, stood looking over the darkening desert with a rather wistful expression in his eyes. For he too would willingly have been the recipient of Eve Loraine's smiles. To speak plainly, he loved the fair-haired Eve with the first real passion his heart had ever known; and he only waited a fitting opportunity to put his fortune to the test.

As for Mahmoud Bey, Owen knew well that there was not, would never be, anything between the young Egyptian and the English girl beyond the merest friendship. To begin with, Owen knew from the indiscreet talk of an acquaintance that Mahmoud had suffered a great disappointment in love; for the girl he had long worshipped had been wedded six months earlier to a rich elderly merchant in Cairo; and Owen's informant had intimated that even yet Mahmoud had not relinquished all hope of one day having the beautiful Yasmina for himself. Meanwhile Mahmoud was kindness itself to the two young Englishmen, both of whom were in Government offices in Cairo. He lent them horses to ride, entertained them hospitably in his villa on the Shubra Road, and did all he could to make their sojourn pleasant. In himself he was so unaffected, so kind and courteous, that Owen, at least, enjoyed his company; and it was Roy who found, or pretended to find, occasion for jealousy in his friendship with Miss Loraine. And indeed, as the days passed, even Roy's jealous fears subsided beneath the young man's genuine kindness; though he still professed to look disapprovingly on Eve's pleasure in Mahmoud's company.

IN the first week of the New Year Sir John and his daughter went to Helouan for a few days; and Owen and Roy were their guests at a dance at the Palace Hotel. A beautiful moonlight night graced the event; and never, to Owen's eyes, had Eve Loraine looked more alluring, more desirable than she did on that memorable occasion. Yet, as they wandered in the garden between the dances, advancing to the low hedge which bordered the desert, their conversation was of things far removed from this tranquil, silver-flooded scene.

All Cairo was ringing with the news of a murder committed that day—the murder of Yasmina, the beautiful young wife of Lala, the prosperous elderly goldsmith of the Mouski. Rumour was busy with the name of Mahmoud Bey; and in response to Eve's questioning Owen told her, briefly, that it had been, apparently, a drama of love and revenge in which Mahmoud had played the central part. Mahmoud and the girl, it seemed, had long been secret lovers; but the lovely Yasmina was as fickle as she was fair; and during an absence from home of her elderly husband, Mahmoud, visiting her unexpectedly, had found her in the arms of another lover—and had immediately shot them both with the revolver which, so it seemed, he was in the habit of carrying. After this deed of vengeance he had vanished into the night; and so far no trace of his whereabouts had been discovered.

THE colour faded out of Eve's charming face as she listened.

"Oh, how terrible! But Mahmoud—he was always so gentle, so considerate, one can't think of him as a murderer."

"Well, Orientals don't look on death quite as we do," said Owen, quietly. "To Mahmoud I expect it was a due reward for the girl's faithlessness; and, of course, he is really a son of the East. One can't judge him by European standards."

"No." She spoke slowly. "I suppose he loved her very much, though she was another man's wife."

"I believe he did. They were betrothed long ago, but during Mahmoud's absence from Cairo her father married her off to the old goldsmith. Well, she's paid for her fickleness, poor girl. And as for Mahmoud—I doubt if we shall see him again."

"He has escaped?"

"Yes, into the desert, I believe." He paused, then spoke resolutely. "We shall all miss him. He was good company, and most hospitable."

"Yes. I wonder"—her voice was low—"I wonder if he will regret what he has done? Or—I wonder if his love for her died when he found she was false to him?"

"Love doesn't die so readily." Suddenly the moonlight, the desert magic, went to Owen's head and he spoke quickly. "Eve, when you speak of love I can't hold back any longer. Don't you know I love you, have loved you in silence all these weeks? Could you ever bring yourself to love me—a little—in return? Oh—don't say anything yet! Think it over—but if you could say 'yes,' you'd make me the happiest fellow on earth!"

There was a silence in which the very desert seemed to hold its breath. To the end of his life Owen would remember that moment. The white African moon shone down on Eve's upturned face, with its delicate features and shining eyes; and as he stood beside her he could see her breast heaving gently beneath her blue and silver frock. When at length she turned

to him he read something in her look which made his heart stand still.

"You mean it? You love me? You want me to marry you—one day?"

"Yes. Eve, do you mean you'll say 'yes'? My God, I can't believe you'll really marry me!"

"If you want me—and you'll give me time." Her voice was shy, her pale cheeks flooded with the loveliest rose. "I—I'd like to say—'yes'!"

A moment later the African moon saw yet another love-scene acted in the magic desert silence; and the age-old desert spirits doubtless whispered scornfully—or tolerantly—of the eternal sameness of human folly as they listened.

Sir John Loraine, interrogated, did not withhold his consent to an engagement between Owen and his beloved little daughter, stipulating only that it should be kept a secret during the remaining weeks of their stay in Egypt. As he reminded the young man, Eve was barely nineteen; and a few weeks' or months' delay could not affect their ultimate felicity; and Owen was reasonable enough to submit without discontent to the older man's conditions.

Some time previously he had arranged with Roy to take a three or four days' journey on horseback into the desert; and since Sir John and Eve were due for a visit to Alexandria at this time he suggested this was the moment for the little expedition. Roy, who was as yet unaware of the engagement, agreed readily enough; and on the morning after Sir John and his daughter left Cairo the two young men set forth in good spirits for their brief holiday.

"I too must return to Cairo without delay. I have already encroached too long on your kindness, Miss Loraine."

Up to this moment nothing had been heard of Mahmoud Bey, though all Cairo was agog to learn his whereabouts. He had been a favourite in all quarters of the city, and, had he known it, public sympathy was with him in this bold and fearless crime. The authorities were apparently

prosecuting a relentless search, but without avail; and their zeal was beginning to die down when it received fresh impetus by the arrival in Cairo of two magnificent sons of the desert from some region in the Soudan, who announced themselves to be brothers of the murdered Yasmina and declared their intention of bringing their sister's slayer to justice.

It was of these men that Roy was speaking as he and Owen cantered over the desert on a sparkling January morning, when the golden sunshine flooded the world beneath a burning blue sky, and a temperate breeze made the air fresh and invigorating to the riders.

"I'd be sorry for Mahmoud if those fellows got hold of him. It would be short shrift for Mahmoud Bey, I expect."

"Yes. They'd not have much mercy, I'm afraid." Owen spoke slowly. "But I expect he is far away by this time—probably with friends leagues off in the desert. I hope they don't get him. He was a gentleman and a sportsman, and after all that little baggage must have known what she was doing when she played fast and loose with a chap like that."

"Some women have no sense of loyalty."

"Nor men either if it comes to that. Men have played the traitor from very early days, and their traditions of honour are supposed to be more deeply rooted than those of women."

"Quite so. But a man doesn't betray his friend as easily as a woman will betray another woman. Personally, I can't picture myself betraying a friend, even to save my life."

"Big words, Roy." Owen's voice was stern. "Life is sweet, and one never knows how much one would do to preserve it from extinction."

"Well, that's my creed, anyway," said Roy, stubbornly. "Of course, one goes through life, generally, without being faced with such problems; but I feel pretty sure I'd carry out what I said just now in any circumstances."

And with those words the discussion dropped; though both were to remember it later.

ON the second day of the expedition a sudden sand-storm arose in the desert. For miles the air was full of whirling, stinging sand grains, which formed into dense clouds, blinding the travellers, turning the vast wilderness into a chaotic, trackless world in which all bearings were lost. The horses shrank and sweated, aghast in this darkening, swirling world, their riders, blinded and bewildered, clinging to their seats as best they might, while the relentless sand grains cut and stung their flesh, filling eyes, nostrils, and throats until they were almost crazy with the torture.

TOWARDS sunset Owen pulled up his horse and shouted in a cracked voice to his companion, almost invisible to him in the sand-filled dusk:—

"Roy, it's no use going on. We must try to find shelter somewhere."

"Yes—but where?" Roy's voice sounded exhausted; his strength was evidently being sorely taxed. "There's no place in this God-forsaken desert—and—my God, here's a tornado coming!"

Suddenly what looked like an enormous solid wall of sand swept over them, and in one moment everything was blotted out, so that it was as though they were drowning in a mountainous wave of pricking, stinging particles. So fierce was the onslaught that the horses stumbled and fell, throwing their riders; and when, a moment later, Owen staggered to his feet, and managed, by good luck, to seize his horse's trailing rein, he could not see his companion.

A sudden panic overcame Owen at this last misfortune. Whatever happened, they must keep together if they were to fight this sand menace, and he called Roy's name with all the breath left in his panting lungs. For some time there was no response; and when at length an answering hail was heard it came from an unexpected direction.

Keeping hold of his horse's rein Owen struggled through the hurricane of flying sand grains, shouting as he went; and suddenly a figure loomed up beside him with an almost startling effect of proximity.

"Pardon, m'sieu, you have lost your friends." So far the new-comer got, speaking in French. But then, breaking into rapid English, he spoke urgently. "Mr. Challis—is it you I find here—lost in the sand-storm?"

"Yes, it's I all right—but is it really you, Mahmoud Bey?" He could scarcely believe that the bearded figure in native robes was his friend.

"It is I—what remains of me!" He shrugged his shoulders quaintly. "How long even so much remains is a question for Allah to decide. You know that I am an escaped murderer, fleeing from justice?" His smile was ironic.

"I know you've been jolly badly treated," said Owen, brusquely. "But surely you are safe out here? I mean—you are on your way to safety?"

"Yes. Forty-eight hours—or less—will see me safe with friends who will not betray me. In the meantime, until the sand-storm subsides I seek shelter in an old hiding-place of mine. And I have much pleasure

Suddenly a figure loomed up beside him with an almost startling effect of proximity.

in offering you a share of that shelter. But "—for a second he hesitated—" you are not alone ? "

" No. But it is only Roy who is with me." He saw how the other's face lightened at the announcement. " We will accept your shelter with gratitude if you really mean your offer."

" Of course. And I think I see our friend dimly through this cloud of sand grains." He raised his voice and called, and a moment later Roy came stumbling towards them,

leading his weary horse, his shoulders sagging, his eyes red and sore with the sand which adhered to their lids.

Mahmoud uttered an exclamation as the boy reached them, for it was evident he was physically exhausted, at the end of his tether.

"You are ill—worn out!" Mahmoud spoke quickly. "You must hasten to my shelter—unless——" He paused, seeming to meditate. "There is an Arab village half a mile away—they are friends of mine—perhaps you would do better there, in the house of the sheikh——"

"I can't go another yard." Roy spoke feebly. "I—I'm done. I shall die if I can't lie down somewhere and rest."

Indeed he looked as though at the point of collapse; and without another word Mahmoud put his arm round the boy's shoulders and led him over the sand dunes to a little hollow in which, invisible to those outside the hollow itself, stood a tiny mosque which had once, so he told them, been the home of a saintly man of old.

As they entered the tiny place he explained this to them.

"Below is an underground chamber," he said, "which is a boon to those who flee for safety. But the secret is known to few—in fact, I believe my knowledge is unique." As he spoke he pressed a rocky boss on the wall, and instantly a large square stone on the ground revolved slowly and disclosed an opening large enough to admit a man's body. "We will leave the horses here—they will not leave this shelter, even though inadequate, while the storm rages; and if you do not fear my company"—he smiled rather grimly—"and will be my guests until the weather improves, I will do my best to show you hospitality."

OWEN CHALLIS and Roy would long remember those hours spent in the underground chamber of the holy man's tomb. Making Roy comfortable on a rude bed of sheepskins, Mahmoud fed him with the choicest of his store of provisions; and presently the boy sank into the sleep of exhaustion, while Owen and his host sat smoking and talking through the hours of the night.

Mahmoud did not attempt to deny his action; admitted openly that he had slain the lovers; and only his eyes betrayed the anguish of his soul as he spoke of the death of the woman he had loved with all his being.

The Englishman in his turn told him of the measures taken for his apprehension; but even when he heard of the two brothers who had sworn to avenge their sister's death he did not betray any doubt as to his ultimate escape.

"With luck I shall win through," he said, quietly. "Not that my life has much value for me now that the light of my eyes is quenched. But I do not choose to be taken, to die like a dog; and I do not fear treachery, which alone would check my escape. In the meantime I rest here till morning. My horse has been lame, or I should have been many leagues farther southward by this time; but he is now recovered, and to-morrow I assure you that the weather will be fine and clear once more and travelling easy."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it. This is the finish of the storm. With dawn I must go—and you—you return to Cairo?"

"Yes. We've had enough of the desert this trip. We've wandered a bit off our track in the storm, but perhaps you will be able to put us right."

"Yes. You can get water, if need be, at the village; and I will give you directions how to regain your track. And now you will do well, my friend, to sleep."

THE sand-storm died away as Mahmoud had predicted; and a clear and beautiful day dawned over the desert, which lay like a sea of tumbled masses of sand, ridged and humped into fantastic shapes beneath the rosy sky. Very early Mahmoud was astir, making coffee for his guests; and before the sun had shot all his dazzling spears of light over the horizon the three were ready for departure.

Mahmoud pointed out the direction of the village to his friends, and explained exactly how they could regain their proper track—a fairly well-defined road used by caravans, from which they had wandered during the storm.

"Then this is good-bye." Challis was sorry to say the word. "We are everlastingly grateful for your help last night. I don't think Roy would have stood out for another twelve hours of the storm. So good-bye—and the best of luck. By the way, we shall of course forget having seen you, once we have parted from you"

"There is no need for gratitude, my friends." Now his smile was melancholy. "For your good wishes I thank you. If my safety depended on your loyalty, I should have nothing to fear. Now the hour advances——" He broke off as Roy uttered an exclamation.

"What a fool I am! I've left my pocket-book, with all my money, in your shack. I'd better run and get it. I won't be a moment——"

" No. I will go—you could not get into the place." Mahmoud smiled. " If you will hold my horse I will be back at once."

HE vanished at a run; and the others stood for a moment in silence, a silence rudely broken by an incredible noise, the thundering of horses' hoofs, of loud voices shouting—voices which were surely fierce, menacing, exultant, all in one. And, as the Englishmen stared, petrified, in the direction whence the clamour arose, a group of native horsemen, superbly mounted, swept over the crest of a sand dune and charged down upon them at a hand gallop.

In a second they were helpless. Two to six had little chance; and in a trice they were disarmed, and surrounded by a ring of fierce, hawk-faced men, two of whom Challis guessed to be the brothers of the slain Yasmina.

Both the Englishmen were excellent linguists—it was Roy's best qualification for the post he held in Cairo—and they realized soon enough that the Arabs were scouring the desert in search of their sister's murderer. In vain they disclaimed all knowledge of Mahmoud's whereabouts, swore they were two travellers on a peaceful expedition over the desert. At first, indeed, the leader of the foray, a splendid-looking man in a green turban, spoke them fair; and for a moment Owen hoped exultantly that they believed the story and would let them go on their way unmolested. But suddenly one of the riders—formerly a servant in the employ of Lala the goldsmith—recognized the third horse as belonging to Mahmoud Bey, and from that moment the Englishmen knew themselves to be fighting a losing game.

Yet they fought on magnificently.

" The horse may belong to the man you mention," said Owen, boldly. " But, if so, its rider is probably lying dead in the desert. We found this animal riderless in the sand-storm last night, and took pity on it."

" Not so." The leader spoke triumphantly. " Where the steed is, there also is the rider. You are Englishmen and we have no quarrel with you; but unless you tell us where this murderer, this assassin, lies concealed we shall slit your throats and bury you beneath the sand."

" You would not dare to touch us—we are Englishmen," said Owen, calmly. " And did you kill us, you would not bring your sister to life! "

" Peace, dog! " Suddenly the leader's eyes flashed fire. " Another word and you die! None will know of your end—you will be thought to have perished in the storm."

" That's quite true, Challis! " Roy's lips were dry. " They could murder us easily enough and no one would be the wiser. After all, it's not our quarrel, and it's for the fellow to get out of it as best he can."

" Good God, Roy! You mean that? " Owen's tone was horrified. " You mean you'd give him away to save your own miserable skin? I tell you they daren't touch us—it's all a bluff, and if we keep it up they will see it is useless." He broke off with a hasty exclamation as one of the Arabs, impatient at this colloquy in an unknown tongue, dug him heavily in the ribs with the butt end of his own revolver; and Roy's teeth began to chatter.

For five minutes the leader of the Arabs talked, threatened, cajoled. It was useless to pretend ignorance, he said, and since Mahmoud Bey was nothing to them they would be doing the right and fair thing to disclose the secret of his hiding-place. That done, he gave them his word they should be allowed to go free and unmolested upon their way—an assurance which Owen believed would be kept. But since to give up Mahmoud Bey, the man who had befriended them, had probably saved Roy's very life, was unthinkable, he merely shook his head and stuck to his story of finding a masterless horse on the previous night.

FOR a moment matters were at a standstill. Then one of the men, exploring, found the little ruined mosque, and announced his discovery in exulting tones to his companions. A search of the place, however, revealed nothing; and it was evident to the Englishmen that Mahmoud had instinctively closed the aperture on descending to search for the pocket-book in the underground chamber.

This last disappointment, however, seemed to set the leader's fiery temper ablaze; and, turning to Owen, with a new peremptoriness he informed him that unless they could offer a more convincing explanation of the presence of the Bey's horse he would have to find expedients to make them speak the truth.

" Your companion seems to be of a different temperament," he said, speaking slowly and clearly that they might understand his words. " I think he will easily be induced to speak the truth, if I bid Selim " — a tall and malicious-looking Soudanese—" interrogate him."

" My God, Owen, they'll murder me! " Roy's voice was shrill with terror. " I can't stand it—I don't want to die. It's our lives against his—we *must* save ourselves even if we have to give Mahmoud away! "

The mention of the name set a flame in the

leader's eyes; and all doubts as to the travellers' knowledge were dissipated at once. He gave a swift order to Selim; and the Soudanese approached the terrified Roy, seizing him roughly, pinioning his arms, while another man, approaching, drew a short dagger from a fold in his garment, and gave it one or two preliminary flourishes in the air.

Instantly Owen sprang forward; but two of the remaining men made him prisoner, and though he struggled and fought to free himself he was powerless in their grasp. Even now he did not believe they meant to kill either himself or Roy—merely to frighten them into betrayal; but as the point of the dagger pricked Roy's arm he screamed loudly in fright; and the next moment was babbling the secret of the hiding-place in the tomb.

After all there was no need for a search; for as Roy's terrified screams rent the air a figure came rushing over the sand dunes from the concealed hollow, firing his revolver as he came swiftly to the rescue of the men whom he had looked upon as his friends.

The last act of the tragedy was brief. Two minutes later the body of Mahmoud Bey, riddled with bullets, lay face downwards in a heap upon the sand—and only a cloud of dust away to the south betokened the whereabouts of the fleeing avengers.

Roy, unable to stand, his *morale* hopelessly lost, temporarily at least, sank to his knees, sobbing frantically. But Owen knelt beside the huddled form of the man who had befriended them; and in his heart was a great sorrow.

"You trusted us—and in your last

A group of native horsemen, superbly mounted, swept over the crest of a sand dune and charged down upon them at a hand gallop.

moment you thought we had betrayed you." He spoke the words aloud slowly. "God knows I would have died a thousand times sooner than do *that*—but you will never know the truth."

Raising himself at last he crossed the intervening space and stood beside his companion, looking down at him with an expression his face had never worn before.

"Don't go on like that, Roy. They've gone—*we're* safe enough, you and I."

"Owen, you know why I couldn't bear it—why I didn't want to die!" Suddenly Roy was stung into an attempt at self-defence. "I wanted to get back to Cairo—to—to Eve Loraine. I—I love her—I'm going to ask her to marry me when I get back—and if she says 'yes'——"

"She won't do that, Roy." Something in Owen's voice made the other man look up quickly. "She has been engaged to me for three weeks."

"And yet you were ready to let those brutes murder us?" His eyes were wide, his voice shrill.

"Yes. I didn't want to go to her branded as a traitor *You* said not long ago you'd never betray a friend, even to save your life."

He regretted his speech as soon as it was uttered. But it struck home to the other man's heart; and he dropped his head into his hands again and sat huddled up in an attitude of hopeless despair.

After a moment Owen moved away and stood looking down on the blue and white heap which represented all that was left of that gallant gentleman, Mahmoud Bey.

In the unseen Arab village among the sand dunes a cock crew suddenly.

STORIES by Douglas

WHAT AMERICA OWES TO BRITISH FILM STARS

THE ROMANCE OF THEIR CAREERS AND SALARIES

SECRETS OF THE FILMS THEY ARE NOW MAKING

REX INGRAM.

ALICE TERRY.

Rex Ingram, the greatest of producers, the creator of that masterpiece "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," is an Englishman. His wife, Alice Terry, one of the loveliest of film stars, is really a brunette, but—such are the freaks of the camera—her own dark hair will not photograph, so that she always appears in a blonde wig!

I HAVE been to California—the place where the sun always shines. I have been to Hollywood, have stayed there and worked in the greatest motion-picture studio in the world—the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

It came about in this way. With Jack Buchanan, Gertrude Lawrence, and Beatrice Lillie I arrived in Hollywood to open the new El Capitan Theatre with the Charlot Revue. I had written a lot of the revue and played a number of parts in it.

One day, towards the end of our run, I was told that a Mr. Thalberg and a Mr. Rapf would like to see me; so I journeyed forth to the

of the FILM STARS

Furber

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM UNIQUE PHOTOGRAPHS

MIRACLES OF MAKE-UP

THE TRAGEDY OF VALENTINO'S UNFINISHED PICTURE

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios. I found two perfectly delightful people who smiled upon me and asked me if I would like to try my hand at writing motion pictures. At that time I did not know I was talking to two of the greatest figures in the industry. To cut a long story

Ralph Forbes, seen above, is a young English actor who is famous as the double of the Prince of Wales. Below is an unpublished photograph of Charlie Chaplin with his new leading lady, Merna Kennedy, in "The Circus," on which he is now working and of which great things are predicted.

Ronald Colman, once a London actor, is now drawing a thousand pounds a week as one of the four greatest young men of the screen.

short, I signed a contract for two months, stayed nearly a year, and am shortly returning to begin again where I left off.

And now I want to give away secrets — secrets of new pictures now in the making behind locked doors, of which the British public has not yet heard. I shall give the names of some which everyone should make a note of and not fail to see. I also want to tell of the stars I have met, the work they are doing, and their plans for the future.

Do you realize what America owes to British film stars? Dozens of the best American motion pictures owe their successes to the English men and women who play in them. One has only to quote Charlie Chaplin, Syd Chaplin, Ronald Colman, Reginald Denny, H. B. Warner, Clive Brook, Ernest Torrence, Victor Maclaglen, Percy Marmont, Henry Victor, Lupino Lane, Montagu Love, Conway Tearle, Ralph Forbes, Philip Strange, George K. Arthur, Donald Stewart, Henry Vibart, Walter Tennyson, Wallace Lupino, David Torrence, Holmes Herbert, Norman Trevor, Charles Lane, and Doris Lloyd. Mary Pickford and Norma Shearer are Canadians. While London is soon to lose another of her greatest stars in Jack Buchanan, who leaves for Hollywood in the near future to make his first American picture.

And all are welcome; for Hollywood wants only the very best and takes care that she gets it. There is nothing small-minded about the American motion-picture magnate. He is bent only upon making good pictures, and he invites the whole world to help him to do it. And if England ever hopes to rival Hollywood, we must be prepared to do the same.

I have met them all—or nearly all. At the Grand Canyon, where we stopped for a few hours on our way to the coast, we ran into "Dicky" Barthelmess and Ronald Colman, holiday-making together. Barthelmess and Colman share with John Gilbert and Ramon Navarro the distinction of being the greatest young men of the screen. Yet only a few years ago Barthelmess and Gilbert were playing comparatively unimportant parts on the legitimate stage, Ramon Navarro was a professional dancer, and our own Ronald Colman had just returned from a provincial tour of the Drury Lane drama, "The Great Day," and was acting in Arthur Rose's "Skittles" at the Apollo Theatre. To-day they each earn over one thousand pounds per week, their names are household words, and they have remained entirely unassuming and utterly unspoiled.

Ramon Navarro, another of the great four, is here seen in a unique special photograph from the film of "Old Heidelberg," which is now in course of making.

Another great lover of the screen—some say the greatest of all—was Rudolph Valentino. I met him when we were producing the Charlot Revue and we had a long chat. There was little of the actor about him. His heart was with his horses and dogs and his brain was with his beautiful collection of old china and antique furniture. He was looking forward to making "Cellini"—a picture of a more artistic kind

Mary Pickford belongs to the British Empire — she is a Canadian. So, too is Norma Shearer, one of the loveliest actresses in pictures; she makes up her eyes with green! Greta Garbo is her rival in the charm of girlish parts — the reader will decide between them according to his taste.

than those he had done in the past. He died only a few days before "Cellini" was due to start. His last photograph — taken shortly before his death—is said to have

MARY PICKFORD.

Tom Mix, and a thousand others attended the *première* of the Charlot Revue, and the speech of dedication was made by Pauline Frederick. Most of them came behind stage after the performance, and others we met that same night at an impromptu party at Edmund Goulding's.

GRETA GARBO.

something uncanny about it, and many people profess to read a hint of tragedy in this strange picture.

Charles Chaplin, Norma and Constance Talmadge, Norma Shearer, Marion Davies, Clive Brook, Raymond Griffith, Harold Lloyd,

NORMA SHEARER.

Syd Chaplin, Charlie's brother, as "Old Bill" and as himself—a marvellous example of the art of making-up.

Goulding, by the way, is a brilliant young Englishman who, in addition to being a famous motion-picture director and brilliant scenarist, has recently written a most successful play in "Dancing Mothers" and an equally successful novel in "Fury." A few years ago he was an actor of small parts at the Alhambra.

A few weeks later and I was rubbing shoulders daily with some of the world's greatest stars at the Metro-Goldwyn Studios. They seem to have half the film firmament under exclusive contract—Lon Chaney, John Gilbert, Ramon Navarro, Antonio Moreno, Lew Cody, Lionel Barrymore, Conrad Nagel, William Haines, Tim McCoy, Jackie Coogan, Norma Shearer, Lilian Gish, Marion Davies, Renée Adorée, Greta Garbo, and a host of others.

Of Lon Chaney and his remarkable powers of disguise many strange stories are told. He is in reality a very quiet and unassuming person with a great sense of humour; but he seems to be fated to play all sorts of extraordinary characters and freak-like people. Thus, in "The Road to Mandalay," he appeared with only one eye. In "The Unknown"—a new picture which he is now making and which you must on no account miss—he appears as a man without arms. In "Mr. Wu"—another picture which all film-lovers must not fail to see—he disguises himself as a Chinaman so completely that even when standing by his side one could not detect how the effect of almond-eyes was obtained. His uncanny powers of disguise have given rein to many humorous stories. For example:—

Two actors were strolling along Hollywood Boulevard when a beetle crossed their path. One of them was about to crush it when the other said, "Don't do that—it may be Lon Chaney!" Then Hollywood has her own version of "Little Red Riding Hood." It runs something like this: "Little Red Riding Hood left her poor old bedridden grandmother and sallied forth into the woods with her little shopping basket. Suddenly she found her path blocked by a great big ugly bear with cruel yellow teeth, sharp, wicked talons, and horrible little bloodshot eyes.

"'Where are you going, little girl?' boomed the great big bear.

"'Shopping for grandmother,

Lon Chaney, of whose mastery of stage disguises some striking anecdotes are here related.

please, Mr. Chaney,' answered little Red Riding Hood."

Again, when recently a famous and popular queen was touring through America and being lionized on all sides, one of the wittiest newspapers issued this " Warning " : " We consider it our duty to point out what a hoax against us it would be if the Queen of —— turned out to be Lon Chaney ! "

Meetings with film stars are full of surprises because many of them look so very different off the screen. When I met Charlie Chaplin for the first time I did not recognize him until I was introduced to him by name. I found him the jolliest person imaginable ; clean-shaven, with a face wreathed in smiles and a rather ruddy complexion—very different from the pathetic Charlie we know so well.

Of intimate stories of famous film stars there appear to be no end. For instance, Alice Terry—the most beautiful blonde of the screen—is a brunette ! A very beautiful woman and an actress of great emotional power, she told me herself that she did not come into her own until she conceived the idea of a blonde wig for all her pictures. Her own beautiful hair does not photograph. She has become English by her marriage, being the wife of Rex Ingram, the greatest of producers.

The camera is all-powerful. Some of the loveliest women in the world have been found useless for films because they photograph badly ; while many of the so-called screen beauties are bitter disappointments when one meets them face to face. Make-up is a great factor. In my twenty years on the stage I have seen only brown, blue, and lake used to make-up the eyelids. Norma Shearer uses green ! and as she is one of the cleverest and daintiest actresses in pictures, green is probably the eyelid of the future. Yet in " Barbed Wire "—a new and fine picture—Pola Negri and the great British film star, Clive Brook, use no make-up at all ! The prettiest girl I have ever encountered is a young actress who played opposite Lupino Lane in my " Music Box Revue " in America. All the studios have interviewed her and nearly all the cleverest camera-men in California have taken her portrait ; but, though every known subterfuge has been tried, she never appears in films. Before a camera she looks utterly commonplace.

Rudolph Valentino — the last photograph taken of him just before his death. There is something uncanny about it, and many people read a hint of tragedy in this strange picture. Annexed is a strip of his last completed film, "The Son of the Sheikh."

Many of these screen stars have a second string to their bow, and, if pictures suddenly failed, could earn a handsome living in some other way. Ramon Navarro is a brilliant musician and a most charming singer. He told me once that, if Fate had not willed otherwise, music would have been his chosen profession. Lew Cody is a great raconteur ; so is Conrad Nagel. Bessie Love is the best Charleston dancer in America. Marion Davies—one of the best-dressed women in California—makes nearly all her own dresses. Reginald Denny is an aviator ! His passion for risking his life has been somewhat checked by the tearful entreaties of the motion-picture world ; but he is never happier than when performing some stunt of a hair-raising kind. Eddie Cantor —the cleverest musical-comedy actor in America—is equally good on the screen ; and Lupino Lane is the greatest acrobatic dancer in the world.

Athletics play their daily part in the life of a film star. Patsy Ruth Miller, Clive Brook, and Percy Marmont are fine tennis

players; Victor Maclaglen is a champion boxer; fencing is represented by John Barrymore, John Gilbert, Ramon Navarro, and the brilliant Douglas Fairbanks; swimming by Evelyn Brent, Nazimova, William Haines, and many others; football by Red Grange; baseball by Babe Ruth; while squash rackets is to-day the passion and despair of every young actor of the screen.

And now for the new pictures at present in the making. First and foremost is "The Circus"—Charlie Chaplin's latest and, it is rumoured, greatest. In this picture he discards his baggy trousers, big boots, and bowler hat, to appear for a brief space in misfit evening clothes and a disreputable topper. In "The Circus" Charlie introduces a new and very promising leading lady in Merna Kennedy, from whom great things are expected.

To give the public some idea of their idol's passion for detail, it is said that for "The Circus" Charlie devoted three months to learning to walk a tight-rope, because he has to do this during the picture for a space of a few seconds.

A picture which no one can afford to miss is "Old Heidelberg." "Old Heidelberg" will enjoy a unique cast, with the greatest "boy" in pictures (Ramon Navarro); the greatest "girl" (Norma Shearer); and the greatest "old man" (Jean Hersholt). It is being directed by the world-famous Ernst Lubitsch, considered by many to be the finest director in motion pictures. Be sure to see this picture—it will be one of the greatest of the year.

All the world has heard of King Vidor, the man who made "The Big Parade." He has found a new star in one James Murray, whom he discovered quite by chance. Vidor was strolling one day through the studios when he espied Murray among a crowd of people waiting for work. Without any hesitation the famous director called Murray aside and offered him the leading part in his new film, which is at present unnamed. Look out in the near future for a picture starring Elinor Boardman and James Murray—great things are expected of it.

Some great productions are to be expected during the year; in fact, it is hoped in Hollywood to make 1927 the most notable year in motion pictures to date. Film-lovers should make special note of the following: "Carmen," with Victor Maclaglen and Dolores del Rio; Cecil B. de Mille's gigantic spectacle, "The King of Kings"; "Romance," with Ramon Navarro; "The King of Soho," with Emil Jannings; "Wind," with Lilian Gish; "Noah's Ark"; "Quality Street," with Marion Davies; "Ordeal," with Lon Chaney; "A Woman Disputed," with Norma Talmadge; "Twelve Miles Out," with John Gilbert; "Jenny Lind," with Lilian Gish; "The Showboat," "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "Resurrection," "Annie Laurie," "The Branding Iron," "Anna Karenina," "Captain Salvation," "Wings," "The Way of All Flesh," "The Rose of Santa Fé," "The Head Waiter," with Adolphe Menjou; "The Big Sneeze," with Wallace Beery; "Smarty," with the new star, William Haines; "The Grey Hat," "The Bugle Call," and "Red, White, and Blue."

The rapid rise of the motion picture makes one of the most romantic tales in the history of the entertainment world; for while I tell of these pictures in the making—pictures employing the greatest artistes, the cleverest inventors, and the most brilliant producers of the day—my mind keeps reverting to an old film which is in the possession of Lupino Lane and which is one of his most treasured souvenirs. The picture is called "To Save Her Soul," and it is a transpontine melodrama of the deepest dye dealing with the abduction of a pure and child-like maiden, the passionate heroics of her clergyman lover, and the eventual triumph of virtue and innocence.

James Murray, a new film star, who was picked out of a crowd of people waiting for work, and entrusted with a leading part in a great film now being made, in which the public will see him for the first time.

"To Save Her Soul" was made only eighteen years ago by the same David Wark Griffith who afterwards made "The Birth of a Nation"! Its total cost was five hundred dollars. The leading lady was Mary Pickford, the double-dyed villain was Mack Sennett, and among the crowd of walking gentlemen one easily recognizes Owen and Tom Moore, James Kirkwood, and Raymond Hitchcock. And to-day we have epics which run into millions. "Ben Hur" is said to have cost seven million dollars before it was completed!

Those in Peril On the Tee

By

P. G. WODEHOUSE

Illustrated by
CHARLES CROMBIE

THE young man with the fresh, ingenuous face turned from the smoking-room window, through which he had been gazing out upon the smiling links.

"Nice day, sir," he said.

The Oldest Member looked up with a start. He eyed the young man with a pleased surprise, gratified to find one of the younger generation of his own volition engaging him in conversation. For of late he had noticed on the part of his juniors a tendency to flit rapidly past him with vague mutterings.

"A beautiful day," he agreed. "You are a new member here, I think?"

"Just joined. It's a great course."

"None better."

"They give you a good lunch, too."

"Capital."

"In fact, the only drawback to the club, the secretary tells me, is that there is a fearful old bore who hangs about the place, lying in wait to collar people and tell them stories."

The Oldest Member wrinkled his forehead thoughtfully.

"I do not know whom he can have been referring to," he said. "No, I cannot recall any such person. But, talking of stories, you will be interested in the one I am about to relate. It is the story of John Gooch, Frederick Pilcher, Sidney McMurdo, and Agnes Flack."

A wordless exclamation proceeded from the young man. His fresh face had lost some of its colour. He looked wistfully at the door.

"John Gooch, Frederick Pilcher, Sidney McMurdo, and Agnes Flack," repeated the Oldest Member, firmly.

You may have noticed (said the Oldest Member) how frequently it happens that practitioners of the Arts are quiet, timid little men, shy in company and unable to express themselves except through the medium of the pencil or the pen. John Gooch was like that. So was Frederick Pilcher. Gooch was a writer and Pilcher was an artist, and they used to meet a good deal at the house of Agnes Flack, where they were constant callers. And every time they met John Gooch would say to himself, as he watched the other balancing a cup of tea and smiling his weak, propitiatory smile, "I am fond of Pilcher, but his best friend could not deny that he is a pretty dumb brick." And Pilcher, as he saw Gooch sitting on the edge of his chair and fingering his tie, would reflect, "Nice fellow as Gooch is, he is certainly a total loss in mixed society."

Mark you, if ever men had an excuse for being ill at ease in the presence of the opposite sex, these two had. They were both eighteen-handicap men, and Agnes Flack was exuberantly and dynamically scratch. She stood about five feet ten in her stockings, and had shoulders and fore-arms which would have excited the envy and admiration of one of those muscular women who good-naturedly allow six brothers, three sisters, and a cousin by marriage to pile themselves on her collar-bone while the orchestra plays a long-drawn chord and the audience streams out to the bar. Her eye resembled the eye of one of the more imperious queens of history; and when she laughed strong men clutched at their temples to keep the tops of their heads from breaking loose.

Even Sidney McMurdo was as a piece of damp blotting-paper in her presence. And

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he was a man who weighed two hundred and eleven pounds and had once been a semi-finalist in the Amateur Championship. He loved Agnes Flack with an ox-like devotion. And yet—and this will show you what life is—when she laughed, it was nearly always at him. I am told by those in a position to know that, on the occasion when he first proposed to her—on the sixth green—distant rumblings of her mirth were plainly heard in the club-house locker-room, causing two men who were afraid of thunder-storms to scratch their match.

Such, then, was Agnes Flack. Such, also, was Sidney McMurdo. And such, while we are on the subject, were Frederick Pilcher and John Gooch.

Now John Gooch, though, of course, they had exchanged a word from time to time, was in no sense an intimate of Sidney McMurdo. It was consequently a surprise to him when one night, as he sat polishing up the rough draft of a detective story—for his was a talent that found expression largely in blood, shots in the night, and millionaires who are found murdered in locked rooms with no possible means of access except a window forty feet above the ground—the vast bulk of McMurdo lumbered across his threshold and deposited itself in a chair.

The chair creaked. Gooch stared. McMurdo groaned.

"Are you ill?" said John Gooch.

"Ha!" said Sidney McMurdo.

He had been sitting with his face buried in his hands, but now he looked up; and there was a red glare in his eyes which sent a thrill of horror through John Gooch. The visitor reminded him of the Human Gorilla in his novel, "The Mystery of the Severed Ear."

"For two pins," said Sidney McMurdo, displaying a more mercenary spirit than the Human Gorilla, who had required no cash compensation for his crimes, "I would tear you into shreds."

"Me?" said John Gooch, blankly.

"Yes, you. And that fellow Pilcher, too." He rose; and, striding to the mantelpiece, broke off a corner of it and crumbled it in his fingers. "You have stolen her from me."

"Stolen? Whom?"

"My Agnes."

John Gooch stared at him, thoroughly bewildered. The idea of stealing Agnes Flack was rather like the notion of sneaking off with the Albert Hall. He could make nothing of it.

"She is going to marry you."

"What!" cried John Gooch, aghast.

"Either you or Pilcher." McMurdo paused. "Shall I tear you into little strips and tread you into the carpet?" he murmured, meditatively.

"No," said John Gooch. His mind was blurred, but he was clear on that point.

"Why did you come butting in?" groaned Sidney McMurdo, absently taking up the poker and tying it into a lover's knot. "I was getting along splendidly until you two pimples broke out. Slowly but surely I was teaching her to love me, and now it can never be. I have a message for you. From her. I proposed to her for the eleventh time to-night; and when she had finished laughing she told me that she could never marry a mere mass of brawn. She said she wanted brain. And she told me to tell you and the pest Pilcher that she had watched you closely and realized that you both loved her, but were too shy to speak, and that she understood and would marry one of you."

THERE was a long silence.

"Pilcher is a splendid fellow," said John Gooch. "She must marry Pilcher."

"She will, if he wins the match."

"What match?"

"The golf match. She read a story in a magazine the other day where two men played a match at golf to decide which was to win the heroine; and about a week later she read another story in another magazine where two men played a match at golf to decide which was to win the heroine. And a couple of days ago she read three more stories in three more magazines where exactly the same thing happened; and she has decided to accept it as an omen. So you and the hound Pilcher are to play eighteen holes, and the winner marries Agnes."

"The winner?"

"Certainly."

"I should have thought—I forget what I was going to say."

McMurdo eyed him keenly.

"You have not been trifling with this girl's affections, Gooch, I hope?"

"No, no. Oh, no."

"Because, if I thought that, I should know what steps to take. Even now——" He paused, and looked at the poker in his hand in a rather yearning sort of way. "No, no," he said, "better not, better not." With a gesture of resignation he flung the thing down. "Good night, weed. The match will be played on Friday morning. And may the better—or, rather, the less impossibly foul—man win."

He banged the door, and John Gooch was alone.

But not for long. Scarcely half an hour had passed when the door opened once

"Why did you come butting in?" groaned Sidney McMurdo, absently taking up the poker and tying it into a lover's knot. "I was getting along splendidly until you two pimples broke out."

more, to admit Frederick Pilcher. The artist's face was pale, and he was breathing heavily. He sat down, and after a brief interval contrived to summon up a smile. He rose and patted John Gooch on the shoulder.

"John," he said, "I am a man who as a general rule hides his feelings. I mask my affections. But I want to say, straight out, here and now, that I like you, John."

"Yes?" said John Gooch.

Frederick Pilcher patted his other shoulder.

"I like you so much, John, old man, that I can read your thoughts, strive to conceal them though you may. I have been watching you closely of late, John, and I know your secret. You love Agnes Flack."

"I don't!"

"Yes, you do. Ah, John, John," said Frederick Pilcher, with a gentle smile, "why try to deceive an old friend? You love her, John. You love that girl. And I have good news for you, John—tidings of great joy. I happen to know that she will look favourably on your suit. Go in and win, my boy, go in and win. Take my advice and dash round and propose without a moment's delay."

John Gooch shook his head. He, too, smiled a gentle smile.

"Frederick," he said, "this is like you. Noble. That's what I call it. Noble. It's the sort of thing the hero does in act two. But it must not be, Frederick. It must not, shall not be. I also can read a friend's heart, and I know that you, too, love Agnes Flack. And I yield my claim. I am excessively fond of you, Frederick, and I give her up to you. God bless you, old fellow. God, in fact, bless both of you."

"Look here," said Frederick Pilcher, "have you been having a visit from Sidney McMurdo?"

"He did drop in for a minute."

There was a tense pause.

"What I can't understand," said Frederick Pilcher, at length, peevishly, "is why, if you don't love this infernal girl, you kept calling at her house practically every night and sitting goggling at her with obvious devotion."

"It wasn't devotion."

"It looked like it."

"Well, it wasn't. And, if it comes to that, why did you call on her practically every night and goggle just as much as I did?"

"I had a very good reason," said Frederick Pilcher. "I was studying her face. I am planning a series of humorous drawings on the lines of Felix the Cat, and I wanted her as a model. To goggle at a girl in the interests of one's Art, as I did, is a very different thing from goggling wantonly at her, like you."

"Is that so?" said John Gooch. "Well, let me tell you that I wasn't goggling wantonly. I was studying her psychology for a series of stories which I am preparing, entitled 'Madeline Monk, Murderess.'"

Frederick Pilcher held out his hand.

"I wronged you, John," he said. "However, be that as it may, the point is that we both appear to be up against it very hard. An extraordinarily well-developed man, that fellow McMurdo."

"A mass of muscle."

"And of a violent disposition."

"Dangerously so."

Frederick Pilcher drew out his handkerchief and dabbed at his forehead.

"You don't think, John, that you might ultimately come to love Agnes Flack?"

"I do not."

"Love frequently comes after marriage, I believe."

"So does suicide."

"Then it looks to me," said Frederick Pilcher, "as if one of us was for it. I see no way out of playing that match."

"Nor I."

"The growing tendency on the part of the modern girl to read trashy magazine stories," said Frederick Pilcher, severely, "is one that I deplore. I view it with alarm. And I wish to goodness that you authors wouldn't write tales about men who play golf matches for the hand of a woman."

"Authors must live," said John Gooch. "How is your game these days, Frederick?"

"Improved, unfortunately. I am putting better."

"I am steadier off the tee." John Gooch laughed bitterly. "When I think of the hours of practice I have put in, little knowing that a thing of this sort was in store for me, I appreciate the irony of life. If I had not bought Sandy McHoots' book last spring, I might now be in a position to be beaten five and four."

"Instead of which, you will probably win the match on the twelfth."

John Gooch started.

"You can't be as bad as that!"

"I shall be on Friday."

"You mean to say you aren't going to try?"

"I do."

"You have sunk to such depths that you would deliberately play below your proper form?"

"I have."

"Pilcher," said John Gooch, coldly, "you are a hound, and I never liked you from the start."

YOU would have thought that, after the conversation which I have just related, no depth of low cunning on the part of Frederick Pilcher would have had the power to surprise John Gooch. And yet, as he saw the other come out of the club-house to join him on the first tee on the Friday morning, I am not exaggerating when I say that he was stunned.

John Gooch had arrived at the links early, wishing to get in a little practice. One of his outstanding defects as a golfer was a pronounced slice; and it seemed to him that, if he drove off a few balls before the match began, he might be able to analyse this slice and see just what was the best stance to take up in order that it might have full scope. He was teeing his third ball when Frederick Pilcher appeared.

"What—what—what——!" gasped John Gooch.

For Frederick Pilcher, discarding the baggy, mustard-coloured plus-fours in which it was his usual custom to infest the links was dressed in a perfectly-fitting morning-coat, yellow waistcoat, striped trousers, spats, and patent-leather shoes. He wore a high stiff collar, and on his head was the glossiest top-hat ever seen off the Stock Exchange. He looked intensely uncomfortable; and yet there was on his face a smirk which he made no attempt to conceal.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Why are you dressed like that?" John Gooch uttered an exclamation. "I see it all. You think it will put you off your game."

"Some idea of the kind did occur to me," replied Frederick Pilcher, airily.

"You fiend!"

"Tut tut, John. These are hard words to use to a friend."

"You are no friend of mine."

"A pity," said Frederick Pilcher, "for I was hoping that you would ask me to be your best man at the wedding." He took a club from his bag and swung it. "Amazing what a difference clothes make. You would hardly believe how this coat cramps the shoulders. I feel as if I were a sardine trying to wriggle in its tin."

The world seemed to swim before John Gooch's eyes. Then the mist cleared, and he fixed Frederick Pilcher with a hypnotic gaze.

"You are going to play well," he said, speaking very slowly and distinctly. "You are going to play well. You are going to play well. You——"

"Stop it!" cried Frederick Pilcher.

"Why are you dressed like that?" John Gooch uttered an exclamation. "I see it all. You think it will put you off your game."

"You are going to play well. You are going——"

A heavy hand descended on his shoulder. Sidney McMurdo was regarding him with a black scowl.

"We don't want any of your confounded chivalry," said Sidney McMurdo. "This match is going to be played in the strictest spirit of—— What the devil are you dressed like that for?" he demanded, wheeling on Frederick Pilcher.

"I—I have to go into the City immediately after the match," said Pilcher. "I sha'n't have time to change."

"H'm. Well, it's your own affair. Come along," said Sidney McMurdo, gritting his teeth. "I've been told to referee this match, and I don't want to stay here all day. Toss for the honour, worms."

John Gooch spun a coin. Frederick Pilcher called tails. The coin fell heads up.

"Drive off, reptile," said Sidney McMurdo.

As John Gooch addressed his ball, he was aware of a strange sensation which he could not immediately analyse. It was only when, after waggling two or three times, he started to draw his club back that it flashed upon him that this strange sensation was confidence. For the first time in his life he seemed to have no doubt that the ball, well and truly struck, would travel sweetly down the middle of the fairway. And then the hideous truth dawned on him. His subconscious self had totally misunderstood the purport of his recent remarks and had got the whole thing nicely muddled up.

Much has been written of the subconscious self, and all that has been written goes to show that of all the thick-headed, blundering chumps who take everything they hear literally, it is the worst. Anybody of any intelligence would have realized that when John Gooch said, "You are going to play well," he was speaking to Frederick Pilcher; but his subconscious self had missed the

point completely. It had heard John Gooch say, "You are going to play well," and it was seeing that he did so.

The unfortunate man did what he could. Realizing what had happened, he tried with a despairing jerk to throw his swing out of gear just as the club came above his shoulder. It was a fatal move. You may recall that when Arnaud Massy won the British Open Championship one of the features of his play was a sort of wiggly twiggle at the top of the swing, which seemed to have the effect of adding yards to his drive. This wiggly twiggle John Gooch, in his effort to wreck his shot, achieved to a nicety. The ball soared over the bunker in which he had hoped to waste at least three strokes; and fell so near the green that it was plain that only a miracle could save him from getting a four.

There was a sardonic smile on Frederick Pilcher's face as he stepped on to the tee. In a few moments he would be one down, and it would not be his fault if he failed to maintain the advantage. He drew back the head of his club. His coat, cut by a fashionable tailor who, like all fashionable tailors, resented it if the clothes he made permitted his customers to breathe, was so tight that he could not get the club-head more than half-way up. He brought it to this point, then brought it down in a lifeless semi-circle.

"Nice!" said Sidney McMurdo, involuntarily. He despised and disliked Frederick Pilcher, but he was a golfer. And a golfer cannot refrain from giving a good shot its meed of praise.

For the ball, instead of trickling down the hill as Frederick Pilcher had expected, was singing through the air like a shell. It fell near John Gooch's ball and, bounding past it, ran on to the green

The explanation was, of course, simple. Frederick Pilcher was a man who, in his normal golfing costume, habitually overswung. This fault the tightness of his coat had now rendered impossible. And his other pet failing, the raising of the head, had been checked by the fact that he was wearing a top-hat. It had been Pilcher's intention to jerk his head till his spine cracked; but the unseen influence of generations of ancestors who had devoted the whole of their intellect to the balancing of top-hats on windy days was too much for him.

A MINUTE later the two men had halved the hole in four.

The next hole, the water-hole, they halved in three. The third, long and over the hill, they halved in five.

And it was as they moved to the fourth tee that a sort of madness came upon both Frederick Pilcher and John Gooch simultaneously.

These two, you must remember, were eighteen-handicap men. That is to say, they thought well of themselves if they could get sixes on the first, sevens on the third, and anything from fours to elevens on the second—according to the number of balls they sank in the water. And they had done these three holes in twelve. John Gooch looked at Frederick Pilcher and Frederick Pilcher looked at John Gooch. Their eyes were gleaming, and they breathed a little stertorously through their noses.

"Pretty work," said John Gooch.

"Nice stuff," said Frederick Pilcher.

"Get a move on, blisters," growled Sidney McMurdo.

It was at this point that the madness came upon these two men.

PICTURE to yourself their position. Each felt that by continuing to play in this form he was running a deadly risk of having to marry Agnes Flack. Each felt that his opponent could not possibly keep up so hot a pace much longer, and the prudent course, therefore, was for himself to ease off a bit before the crash came. And each, though fully aware of all this, felt that he was dashed if he wasn't going to have a stab at doing the round of his life. It might well be that, having started off at such a clip, he would find himself finishing somewhere in the eighties. And that, surely, would compensate for everything.

After all, felt John Gooch, suppose he did marry Agnes Flack, what of it? He had faith in his star, and it seemed to him that she might quite easily get run over by a truck or fall off a cliff during the honeymoon. Besides, with all the facilities for divorce which modern civilization so beneficently provides, what was there to be afraid of in marriage, even with an Agnes Flack?

Frederick Pilcher's thoughts were equally optimistic. Agnes Flack, he reflected, was undeniably a pot of poison; but so much the better. Just the wife to keep an artist up to the mark. Hitherto he had had a tendency to be a little lazy. He had avoided his studio and loafed about the house. Married to Agnes Flack, his studio would see a lot more of him. He would spend all day in it—probably have a truckle bed put in and never leave it at all. A sensible man, felt Frederick Pilcher, can always make a success of marriage if he goes about it in the right spirit.

John Gooch's eyes gleamed. Frederick Pilcher's jaw protruded. And neck and neck, fighting grimly for their sixes and sometimes even achieving fives, they came

to the ninth green, halved the hole, and were all square at the turn.

It was at this point that they perceived Agnes Flack standing on the club-house terrace.

"Yoo-hoo!" cried Agnes in a voice of thunder.

And John Gooch and Frederick Pilcher stopped dead in their tracks, blinking like abruptly-awakened somnambulists.

She made a singularly impressive picture, standing there with her tweed-clad form outlined against the white of the club-house wall. She had the appearance of one who is about to play Boadicea in a pageant; and John Gooch, as he gazed at her, was conscious of a chill that ran right down his back and oozed out at the soles of his feet.

"How's the match coming along?" she yelled, cheerily.

"All square," replied Sidney McMurdo, with a sullen scowl. "Wait where you are for a minute, germs," he said. "I wish to have a word with Miss Flack."

He drew Agnes aside and began to speak to her in a low rumbling voice. And presently it was made apparent to all within a radius of half a mile that he had been proposing to her once again, for suddenly she threw her head back and there went reverberating over the countryside that old familiar laugh.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, HA!" laughed Agnes Flack.

John Gooch shot a glance at his opponent. The artist, pale to the lips, was removing his coat and hat and handing them to his caddie. And, even as John Gooch looked, he unfastened his braces and tied them round his waist. It was plain that from now on Frederick Pilcher intended to run no risk of not overswinging.

John Gooch could appreciate his feelings. The thought of how that laugh would sound across the bacon and eggs on a rainy Monday morning turned the marrow in his spine to ice and curdled every red corpuscle in his veins. Gone was the exhilarating ferment which had caused him to skip like a young ram when a long putt had given him a forty-six for the first nine. How bitterly he regretted now those raking drives, those crisp flicks of the mashie-niblick of which he had been so proud ten minutes ago. If only he had not played such an infernally good game going out, he reflected, he might at this moment be eight or nine down and without a care in the world.

A shadow fell between him and the sun; and he turned to see Sidney McMurdo standing by his side, glaring with a singular intensity.

"Bah!" said Sidney McMurdo, having regarded him in silence for some moments.

He turned on his heel and made for the club-house.

"Where are you going, Sidney?" asked Agnes Flack.

"I am going home," replied Sidney McMurdo, "before I murder these two miserable harvest-bugs. I am only flesh and blood, and the temptation to grind them into powder and scatter them to the four winds will shortly become too strong. Good morning."

Agnes emitted another laugh like a steam-riveter at work.

"Isn't he funny?" she said, addressing John Gooch, who had clutched at his scalp and was holding it down as the vibrations died away. "Well, I suppose I shall have to referee the rest of the match myself. Whose honour? Yours? Then drive off and let's get at it."

THE demoralizing effects of his form on the first nine holes had not completely left John Gooch. He drove long and straight, and stepped back appalled. Only a similar blunder on the part of his opponent could undo the damage.

But Frederick Pilcher had his wits well about him. He overswung as he had never overswung before. His ball shot off into the long grass on the right of the course, and he uttered a pleased cry.

"Lost ball, I fancy," he said. "Too bad!"

"I marked it," said John Gooch, grimly. "I will come and help you find it."

"Don't trouble."

"It is no trouble."

"But it's your hole, anyway. It will take me three or four to get out of there."

"It will take me four or five to get a yard from where I am."

"Gooch," said Frederick Pilcher, in a cautious whisper, "you are a cad."

"Pilcher," said John Gooch, in tones equally hushed, "you are a low bounder. And if I find you kicking that ball under a bush, there will be blood shed—and in large quantities."

"Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha to you!" said John Gooch.

The ball was lying in a leathery tuft, and, as Pilcher had predicted, it took three strokes to move it back to the fairway. By the time Frederick Pilcher had reached the spot where John Gooch's drive had finished, he had played seven.

But there was good stuff in John Gooch. It is often in times of great peril that the artistic temperament shows up best. Missing the ball altogether with his next three swings, he topped it with his fourth, topped it again with his fifth, and, playing the like, sent a low, skimming shot well over the

green into the bunker beyond. Frederick Pilcher, aiming for the same bunker, sliced and landed on the green. The six strokes which it took John Gooch to get out of the sand decided the issue. Frederick Pilcher was one up at the tenth.

BUT John Gooch's advantage was short-lived. On the right, as you approach the eleventh green, there is a deep chasm, spanned by a wooden bridge. Frederick Pilcher, playing twelve, just failed to put his ball into this, and it rolled on to within a few feet of the hole. It seemed to John Gooch that the day was his. An easy mashie-shot would take him well into the chasm, from which no eighteen-handicap player had ever emerged within the memory of man. This would put him two down—a winning lead. He swung jubilantly, and brought off a nicely-lofted shot which seemed to be making for the very centre of the pit.

And so, indeed, it was; and it was this fact that undid John Gooch's schemes. The ball, with all the rest of the chasm to choose from, capriciously decided to strike the one spot on the left-hand rail of the wooden bridge which would deflect it towards the flag. It bounded high in the air, fell on the green; and the next moment, while John Gooch stood watching with fallen jaw and starting eyes, it had trickled into the hole.

There was a throbbing silence. Then Agnes Flack spoke.

"Important, if true," she said. "All square again. I will say one thing for you two—you make this game very interesting."

And once more she sent the birds shooting out of the tree-tops with that hearty laugh of hers. John Gooch, coming slowly to after the shattering impact of it, found that he was clutching Frederick Pilcher's arm. He flung it from him as if it had been a loathsome snake.

A grimmer struggle than that which took place over the next six holes has probably never been seen on any links. First one, then the other seemed to be about to lose the hole, but always a well-judged slice or a timely top enabled his opponent to rally. At the eighteenth tee the game was still square; and John Gooch, taking advantage of the fact that Agnes had stopped to tie her shoe-lace, endeavoured to appeal to his one-time friend's better nature.

"Frederick," he said, "this is not like you."

"What isn't like me?"

"Playing this low-down game. It is not like the old Frederick Pilcher."

"Well, what sort of a game do you think you are playing?"

"A little below my usual, it is true," admitted John Gooch. "But that is due to nervousness. You are deliberately trying to foozle, which is not only painting the lily but very dishonest. And I can't see what motive you have, either."

"You can't, can't you?"

John Gooch laid a hand persuasively on the other's shoulder.

"Agnes Flack is a most delightful girl."

"Who is?"

"Agnes Flack."

"A delightful girl?"

"Most delightful."

"Agnes Flack is a delightful girl?"

"Yes."

"Oh?"

"She would make you very happy."

"Who would?"

"Agnes Flack."

"Make me happy?"

"Very happy."

"Agnes Flack would make me happy?"

"Yes."

"Oh?"

John Gooch was conscious of a slight discouragement. He did not seem to be making headway.

"Well, then, look here," he said, "what we had better do is to have a gentleman's agreement."

"Who are the gentlemen?"

"You and I."

"Oh?"

John Gooch did not like the other's manner, nor did he like the tone of voice in which he had just spoken. But then there were so many things about Frederick Pilcher that he did not like that it seemed useless to try to do anything about it. Moreover, Agnes Flack had finished tying her shoe-lace, and was making for them across the turf like a mastodon striding over some prehistoric plain. It was no time for wasting words.

"A gentleman's agreement to halve the match," he said hurriedly.

"What's the good of that? She would only make us play extra holes."

"We would halve those, too."

"Then we should have to play it off another day."

"But before that we could leave the neighbourhood."

"Sidney McMurdo would follow us to the ends of the earth."

"Ah, but suppose we didn't go there? Suppose we simply lay low in the city and grew beards?"

"There's something in it," said Frederick Pilcher, reflectively.

"You agree?"

"Very well."

"Splendid!"

Agnes emitted another laugh like a steam-riveter at work. "Isn't he funny?" she said, addressing John Gooch, who had clutched at his scalp and was holding it down as the vibrations died away.

"What's splendid?" asked Agnes Flack, thudding up.

"Oh—er—the match," said John Gooch. "I was saying to Pilcher that this was a splendid match."

Agnes Flack sniffed. She seemed quieter than she had been at the outset, as though something were on her mind.

"I'm glad you think so," she said. "Do you two always play like this?"

"Oh, yes. Yes. This is about our usual form."

"H'm! Well, push on."

It was with a light heart that John Gooch addressed his ball for the last drive of the match. A great weight had been lifted from

his mind, and he told himself that now there was no objection to bringing off a real sweet one. He swung lustily; and the ball, struck on its extreme left side, shot off at right angles, hit the ladies' tee-box, and, whizzing back at a high rate of speed, would have mown Agnes Flack's ankles from under her, had she not at the psychological moment skipped in a manner extraordinarily reminiscent of the high hills mentioned in Sacred Writ.

"Sorry, old man," said John Gooch, hastily, flushing as he encountered Frederick Pilcher's cold look of suspicion. "Frightfully sorry, Frederick, old man. Absolutely unintentional."

"What are you apologizing to *him* for?" demanded Agnes Flack with a good deal of heat. It had been a near thing, and the girl was ruffled.

Frederick Pilcher's suspicions had plainly not been allayed by John Gooch's words. He drove a cautious thirty yards, and waited with the air of one suspending judgment for his opponent to play his second. It was with a feeling of relief that John Gooch, smiting vigorously with his brassie, was enabled to establish his *bona fides* with a shot that rolled to within mashie-niblick distance of the green.

Frederick Pilcher seemed satisfied that all was well. He played his second to the edge of the green. John Gooch ran his third up into the neighbourhood of the pin.

Frederick Pilcher stooped and picked his ball up.

"Here!" cried Agnes Flack.

"Hey!" ejaculated John Gooch.

"What on earth do you think you're doing?" said Agnes Flack.

Frederick Pilcher looked at them with mild surprise.

"What's the matter?" he said. "There's a blob of mud on my ball. I just wanted to brush it off."

"Oh, my heavens!" thundered Agnes Flack. "Haven't you ever read the rules? You're disqualified."

"Disqualified?"

"Hullo?"
"I'm going to marry you, after all."
"Me?"
"Yes, you."

"Dis-jolly-well-qualified," said Agnes Flack, her eyes flashing scorn. "This cripple here wins the match."

Frederick Pilcher heaved a sigh.

"So be it," he said. "So be it."

"What do you mean, so be it? Of course it is."

"Exactly. Exactly. I quite understand. I have lost the match. So be it."

And, with drooping shoulders, Frederick Pilcher shuffled off in the direction of the bar.

"Three rousing cheers!" bellowed McMurdo

John Gooch watched him go with a seething fury which for the moment robbed him of speech. He might, he told himself, have expected something like this. Frederick Pilcher, lost to every sense of good feeling and fair play, had double-crossed him. He shuddered as he realized how inky must be the hue of Frederick Pilcher's soul; and he wished in a frenzy of regret that he had thought of picking his own ball up. Too late! Too late!

For an instant the world had been blotted out for John Gooch by a sort of red mist. This mist clearing, he now saw Agnes Flack standing looking at him in a speculative sort of way, an odd expression in her eyes. And beyond her, leaning darkly against the club-house wall, his bulging muscles swelling beneath his coat and his powerful fingers tearing to pieces what appeared to be a section of lead piping, stood Sidney McMurdo.

John Gooch did not hesitate. Although McMurdo was some distance away, he could see him quite clearly; and with equal clearness he could remember every detail of that recent interview with him. He drew a step nearer to Agnes Flack, and, having gulped once or twice, began to speak.

"Agnes," he said, huskily, "there is something I want to say to you. Oh, Agnes, have you not guessed——"

"One moment," said Agnes Flack. "If you're trying to propose to me, sign off. There is nothing doing. The idea is all wet."

"All wet?"

"All absolutely wet. I admit that there was a time when I toyed with the idea of marrying a man with brains, but there are limits. I wouldn't marry a man who played golf as badly as you do if he were the last man in the world. Sid-nee!" she roared, turning and cupping her mouth with her hands; and a nervous golfer down by the lake-hole leaped three feet and got his mashie entangled between his legs.

"Hullo?"

"I'm going to marry you, after all."

"Me?"

"Yes, you."

"Three rousing cheers!" bellowed McMurdo.

Agnes Flack turned to John Gooch. There was something like commiseration in her eyes, for she was a woman. Rather on the large side, but still a woman.

"I'm sorry," she said.

"Don't mention it," said John Gooch.

"I hope this won't ruin your life."

"No, no."

"You still have your Art."

"Yes, I still have my Art."

"Are you working on anything just now?" asked Agnes Flack.

"I'm starting a new story to-night," said John Gooch. "It will be called 'Saved From the Scaffold.'"

NEXT MONTH:

"CAME THE DAWN,"

By P. G. WODEHOUSE

"HENRY" OF GRETON STREET

By

SELWYN JEPSON

Illustrated by
S. H. VEDDER

HENRY'S chief trouble was a lack of parents. It was a disadvantage which affected the community quite as much as it affected Henry, because, instead of having been brought up in a sensible way by the people responsible for his existence, he was allowed to bring himself up, a state of affairs resulting in an unfortunate ignorance of the first principles of honesty as understood by the civilized world.

He possessed a distressingly revolutionary attitude. He hated comfortable people because he was not comfortable himself. Who could be who lived in a Shepherd's Bush attic and hadn't got a name that rightfully belonged to him? Henry's disgust with his father and mother for not leaving him with even a little data concerning himself increased as he reached an age when fierce ambition seized him—when he realized that beyond the squalid life of the immediate neighbourhood lay a wondrous land into which one could walk if one possessed the knowledge and the means.

At nineteen, where this glimpse of his strange personality is possible, Henry worked behind the counter of an ironmonger's in Greton Street. He sold packets of tintacks and cheap saucepans to frowzy women under the watchful, bullying eye of Mr. Trip, who owned the business. In spite of Mr. Trip, however, Henry managed to steal—he called it "pinch"—a fair amount of stuff which he was able to dispose of to Mr. Lett for a certain quantity of shillings every week or so.

This procedure was entirely natural to him. He had learnt in a hard school that the weak might take from the strong whenever they got the chance because the strong took from the weak all the time.

Henry was certainly one of the weak. Early privations had kept him small in stature, thin of face, and shifty-eyed. His skin was an unhealthy yellow; his hands claw-like and always dirty.

There came a day when he washed those same hands.

He saw a girl. She came into Mr. Trip's establishment one afternoon, a creature as widely separated from the usual type of customer as light from darkness. She had a clean face, a little short fur coat, a little hat, and her legs were adorned by stockings of the palest straw-coloured silk. A ravishing vision. She was a visitant from the world of ease so hated by Henry, but he did not think of her as such. He gaped at her, and was glad that the Trip brute was elsewhere at the moment.

The girl wanted a two-and-a-half-inch bolt. She waved a gloved hand at a two-seater drawn up at the kerb outside the shop. A mud-guard was loose—a bolt was missing, and the thing rattled. It annoyed her. Perhaps he could fix it for her. She'd be so obliged.

Then she smiled at Henry.

He blinked. He expanded. He talked about motor-cars. He talked, after a minute or two, about life.

"It isn't often I get a job like this, miss. Something with *interest* hattached to it. I'm only a dratted ironmonger's assistant. I got ideas, though. I'm going to be *someone* some day!"

"Of course you are! I can see that." She smiled at him again. He thrilled, and gave the nut a final twist. A minute later he rubbed the dust off the spanner and watched the small grey car roll smoothly down the road, steering neatly through the traffic—back into the comfortable world.

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She waved a gloved hand at a two-seater outside the shop. A mud-guard was loose—a bolt was missing, and the thing rattled. Perhaps he could fix it for her.

Henry drew back his thin lips into a sneer as he returned into the shop, for he was remembering where and what he was. He tried to keep his distorted imagination centred on the girl herself, but he could not manage it. He kept getting back to the fact that he was a nobody scratching food out of a dirty gutter of a place, and that he hadn't ever had a chance.

But, in thinking that, he was no more blind than many wiser than he. He *had* had his chance. The fierce ambition which had been engendered by vague and fleeting glimpses of other things in the picture theatres and in the pages of magazines, where he found illustrations of beautiful women and sumptuous homes, flamed and burned until it became well-nigh unbearable. He lay on his truckle bed and stared at the night sky through the dirty window. One star winked at him, and mocked, and Henry ground his teeth. He would do it—he would! He'd snatch something good from life before he was too old, before the dull, apathetic resentfulness seized him as it inevitably seized those about him. Fifteen shillings a week, and occasionally five bob from the sale of trifles he could pinch when Trip wasn't looking. What could he do on that? Nothing! Would it ever bring him nearer that girl in the motor-car and those like her? It would not; and Henry, impotent to change things, knew it.

He stole a brass kettle next day and cleared seven-and-six on it. But it wasn't much use, small money wasn't. He began to formulate schemes for getting rich quickly. Wild schemes they were, and served only to make him more discontented.

THE Sunday immediately following the incident of the two-and-a-half-inch bolt he took a bus by The Pond and rode as far as Marble Arch. Threepence—half the price of a packet of fags, precious luxuries he would rather have than food—took him into the world that was different. He'd been there before, either to gaze or to mock, disguising his envy; but this visit was tinged with a sincerer emotion. The world of warmth, of beauty, of luxury had stretched out a hand to him, and he now came to it prepared to let it be friendly—to allow it to show him other sides of its significance. One day, whatever happened, he would enter it equipped with all necessary weapons. He was sure of that, even if his imagination pointed out only puerile joys and foolish as being in store for him, the lucky adventurer. He would sit in one of those long, lean motor-cars and be driven by a man (whose face should resemble that of Mr. Trip) far out into the country. He would eat large quantities of good food in restaurants where the electric light cost a fortune every night; he would surround himself with beautiful young women, with priceless possessions, with exquisite clothes. Ah! Those clothes! Henry had one suit, and the suit had had several owners before it got to Henry. He hated it almost as furiously as he hated the luckier members of the human race.

He watched a limousine disgorge a magnificent young man in Park Lane, and heard the youth say to the chauffeur:—

"Goin' to walk, thank you, James."

A hand went to a shining peak of a cap, an impassive face gave no indication that the words were heard. The limousine slid away noiselessly and the magnificent young man—walked.

To Henry, an open-mouthed bystander, it was the final gesture of riches. To walk when one could be carried by a car of such surpassing perfection!

On Monday morning Henry washed his hands, but on Tuesday he parted with a roll of copper wire, old Lett giving him one-and-six for it.

This Lett kept a strange emporium at the other end of Greton Street, close to the Goldhawk Road. You could buy anything on earth there, and a good deal more in the way of things nobody else would dream of stocking. Anything from an iron band for a wagon-wheel to a penny strip of liquorice lay under that roof. Lett was a greasy man who had lived in a miserable cupboard of a room above the shop since the first days of the neighbourhood's decline—fattening on that decline but remaining very poor meanwhile. Buying and selling, buying and selling interminably; his yellow-white eyes peering behind thick pebble lenses set in a rusty iron frame; his throaty, cracked voice haggling and haggling.

Henry did business with him, but took little account of him. He was one of the monsters in the life that bound Henry down. He was not to be trusted. Occasionally one saw a slatternly woman: Lett's niece, working in the dirt of the shop, eternally "tidying up"—an impossible feat with the odds and ends of five decades lying so thick. Her appearances there were spasmodic, however. She drank a good deal of gin, but that was in no way odd—they all did—and lived somewhere in the slums west of Greton Street.

Henry complained bitterly to Mr. Lett about the niggardliness of his offer for the copper wire.

"It weighs heavy," he told him. "It's wurf a sight more'n one and a tanner."

"I gotter live," remarked the old man. "An' suppose I asks yer how yer came by this same wire?"

" I told you. My aunt come across it, and she says, ' Take it to Mister Lett an' ask 'im wot——' "

" One and a tanner," said Lett, unimpressed.

" Oh, gimme ! " snapped Henry, and thrust the coins into his trousers pocket.

He had now saved one pound eighteen shillings toward freedom, and never for a moment could he get away from the fact that it was nothing—and would be nothing, however long he stuck at the job of increasing it. Something had got to be done to bring money in large quantities.

Henry commenced to tread the road so many had trodden before him. He joined a gang of jovial young men in the hope that he would in time be allowed to learn the tricks of the trade. One of these youths, for instance, made quite a prosperous living out of motor-car accessories. He took them out of the tool-boxes of unattended cars and sold them in various places. He saw life, did this fellow, and wore good clothes.

Henry sat back in envy, wondering if he would ever reach such heights of courage and daring. He had not much faith in his own powers, however strong might be his ambitions.

It was with a sense of shock that Henry saw the girl in the two-seater again. It had not occurred to him for a moment that he would ever set eyes on her, but he did. He was standing at the door of the shop in a slack period of the afternoon, and she drove past, her grey car showing up in that dingy street like a white yacht in a roadstead of cargo boats. Her hands, so small and delicate, rested easily on the wheel, and she drove as if she possessed the earth. She had an imperial air which Henry had noticed the first time, but which now seemed to sway the street.

The miracle happened when she glanced casually in his direction, saw and recognized him, and graciously inclined her small head. It was the affair of an instant to her ; a matter of common kindliness such as she performed without thinking twenty times a day. But to Henry it was something more. It was an affair of many minutes to him ; a matter of wondrous, indefinable excitement such as he had never before experienced. She had recognized him ! He was something more than just one of a teeming multitude ; she had remembered him and the small service he had done her for four days ! It was incredible ! He existed in her consciousness !

Of course, he could not analyse it in such terms ; but emotionally he analysed it thus. A wave of exhilaration swept over him. He realized, too, that if she had passed this way twice she would in all probability pass again ; it meant that Greton Street lay in the route of some journey she was accustomed to make. He might see her often. She might nod to him again and again She might even stop and buy something at the shop. Henry scowled at the window of it. If only it was a garage ! How much more likely she would be to patronize it !

He stood staring after the two-seater, aware of a hot surge of blood to his face.

" Hullo ! " said a voice, and Henry turned to see Alldyce, the policeman, a young man with whom Henry was on terms of playful badinage. " Hullo ! Hullo ! Gay young fella ! Throwing the optic, eh ? You look out I don't have to arrest you for seduction ! "

" Get away with you," said Henry, wishing that policy did not interfere with his desire to punch the man's nose. But the police were the police. You had to watch your step because it paid.

He floundered into the shop, out of the range of Alldyce's merry vision. He beat the counter with his fists. The reaction was beginning. He was still Henry, the boy who worked for Trip in Greton Street. He would always, always be beyond the pale. Never would he talk to that fair, radiant creature of the two-seater as an equal—never !

BEFORE Trip returned from the billiard-room where he was wont to spend an hour at this time of day, Henry secreted another and larger coil of copper wire in the lining of his jacket. Half a crown, perhaps. Bah ! What was the use ?

However, when the shop closed at ten that night he made his way to Lett's place, hoping to reach it before the old man put up the shutters. But the shutters were already up when he got there.

He considered waiting until to-morrow, but prudence advised his getting the wire off his hands as soon as possible. It had been rather silly to pinch it in the first place, seeing he'd already had a coil a day or so before. Trip was a rotten bad stock-taker, however, and there was a whole year yet before he went through the stock again.

Henry decided to go round to the back of Lett's shop and get his business over. The old man would hardly be in bed yet.

He went through the dark passage-way at the side of the second-hand dealer's, turned into the yard, and approached the back entrance, stumbling over the mass of stuff that had overflowed into the open air. The back door was closed. Henry knocked on it. He felt that he was an established client and justified.

The door, however, was neither locked nor fastened. It swung open under the

pressure of his hand. He peered into the cavern of darkness it disclosed, and called :—

"You there, Mister Lett? It's Henry, from Trip's!"

There was no answer. A step forward into the house enabled Henry to see a shaft of light emanating from the upper storey, shining down the narrow ladder which served as a stairway. The worn rungs of it showed black, and regularly spaced. The trap-door of Lett's sleeping apartment was open, then. The light was not steady, but flickered. A candle, obviously.

"'E's goin' to bed," thought Henry, and hesitated as to whether he should retire and leave the old man in peace or carry on with his original intention. The matter was decided for him by an injudicious step sideways which upset something or other that fell with an infernal clanging of heavy iron—a clothes-mangle, maybe, ill-balanced on a pile of other things.

"Drat!" said Henry aloud. "It's only me, Mister Lett!"

But, oddly enough, Mr. Lett made no sign of having heard the uproar.

"'E's asleep, that's what 'e is. And asleep 'eavy," said Henry to himself. "Why hasn't he blowed out that candle? A waste, it is, leavin' it burnin'. And dangerous. Start a fire, maybe." He considered briefly, and then :—

"Hi! *Mr. Lett!*"

His voice died in the darkness of the crowded shop, and that was all. No answer came from the room above.

Henry suddenly wiped his brow with the back of his hand, and it came away wet with perspiration. It was not a warm night.

Slowly picking his way amid the *débris* of the years, Henry made his way to the foot of the ladder, and there stood gazing upward, speculating. Everything was extraordinarily quiet—not with the quietness of emptiness, but with something else Henry did not try to define or understand. He was uncomfortable. He felt as if he had no business where he was at all; that he was intruding. But that was ridiculous. He was an acquaintance of the old man's, quite apart from their business dealings together.

He made up his mind.

"I'll go and blow it out without wakin' 'im."

It was nothing more than an excuse to have done with the nervous tremors that were assailing his legs and back. The mere movement of climbing the ladder eased the sensation.

He poked his head through the opening of the trap-door and saw the private apartment of Mr. Lett for the first time. It was in no way different from the shop below, save that it contained a rusty iron bedstead which stood up uncertainly on three legs in the middle of the same kind of rubbish that filled the lower regions.

On the bed lay Mr. Lett himself. Henry could see the hump of his shoulder and the shadow thrown by the candle on to the ceiling. His hawk nose seemed monstrous, and below it a wide gap before his chin began—his mouth lying slackly open.

The candle stood on a low table at the bedside, and every now and then its flame, touched by a draught of air, wavered from its straight serenity. The shadow of Mr. Lett would dance grotesquely.

Henry straightened his back and advanced into the garret, making for the candle. He felt in his pocket as he came; yes, he had a box of matches. They would be necessary if he was to retrace his steps in the dark.

Suddenly Henry stopped. The hand which had been touching his pocket dropped to his side and there clenched tightly. He was horribly, terribly frightened.

Mr. Lett was dead.

HENRY had been to the pictures often enough to have accustomed himself to the conventional attitudes of the deceased of film-land, but never had he seen anything quite as realistic, quite as wholly dead as Mr. Lett at this moment.

"Oh!" said Henry, softly, in a thick voice. "Oh, my Gawd, let me get out o' this quick!"

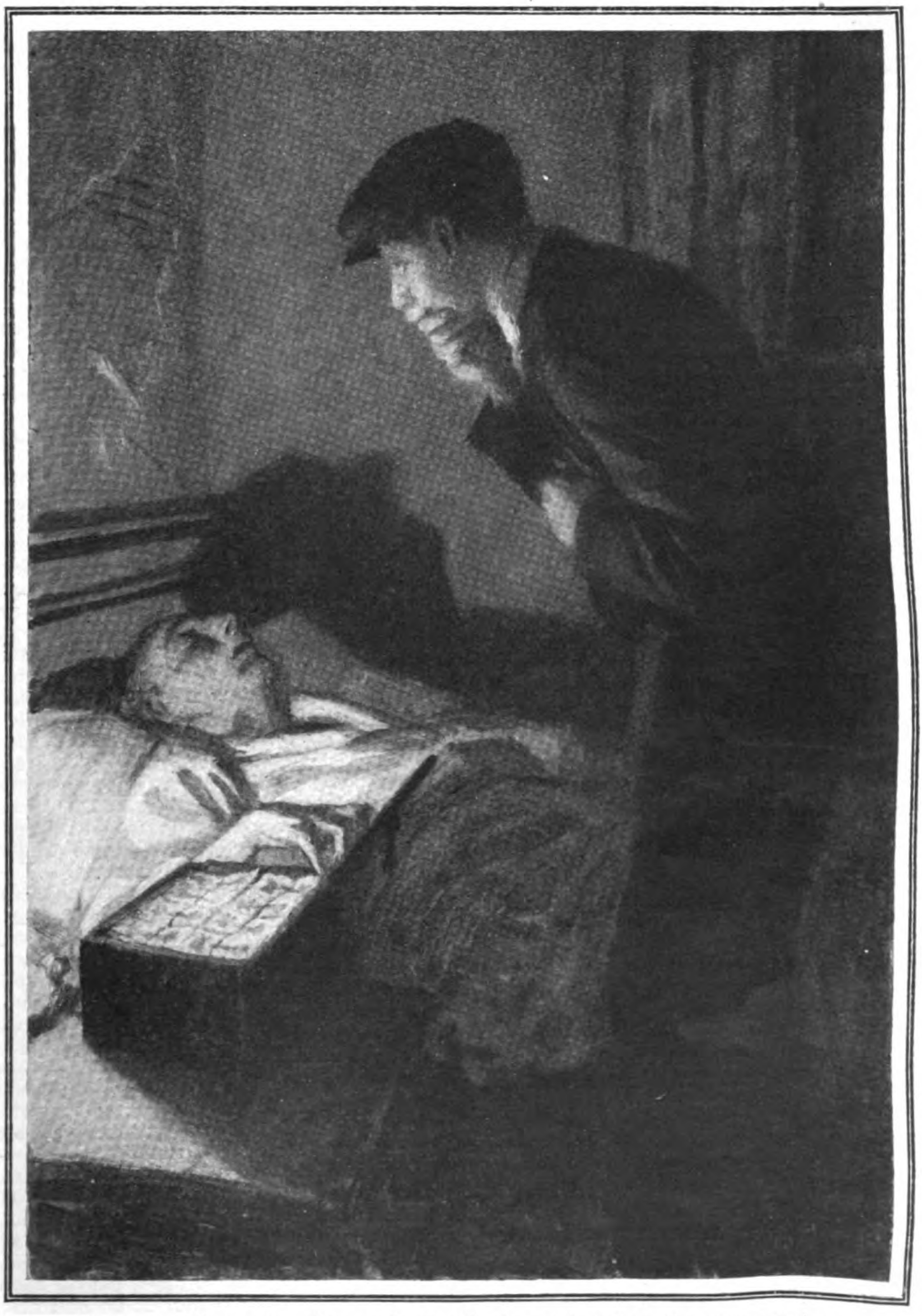
Even as he turned he saw something else which in a moment of time was able to exert sufficient influence over his lax muscles and shocked mind to bring him up with all his wits working sharply. He stood still again, and again stared. Then, after a second, he advanced, overcoming his terror of the body of Mr. Lett with the wild curiosity that this new thing aroused.

What Henry saw was money.

It lay in an iron cash-box under the dead hand of Mr. Lett. The lid of this box was open, and the light fell on the bundles of notes it contained, so that they stood out clearly, every line and design on the top ones vivid to the gleaming eyes of Henry.

He put his hand to his mouth to stifle the exclamation of excitement that the sight of such untold wealth called to his lips. It was like a vision in a dream; a dream beyond the imaginative powers even of a Henry, with all his desire for money. They were Treasury notes, pounds and ten shillings, neatly piled and clipped together with elastic bands. The box was twelve inches square by six deep. Hundreds of pounds' worth of notes!

Henry reconstructed the affair, now that he had passed from his first horror. He saw



Henry put his hand to his mouth to stifle the exclamation of excitement that the sight of such untold wealth called to his lips.

that the old man must have died naturally, for, apart from the fact that there was no sign of blood about, if he had been murdered the murderer would obviously have taken the money with him. He persuaded himself to look more closely at the remains of Mr. Lett. He might be asleep, indeed, save for the stupid vacancy of that fallen jaw and the wide staring of those sightless eyes. No wonder the shop had been closed a little early if Mr. Lett, feeling unwell, had decided to seek his bed. Henry saw the whole thing. And the presence of the cash-box—in that the old man had obeyed the promptings of his miserly, hoarding soul when he had dragged it from its hiding-place in his last hour to reassure himself that it was safe; that the collected profits of a life-time were indeed there.

Very cautiously Henry advanced closer, and putting forth a forefinger he dug it into the cash-box, levering up the bundles. His nail touched a flimsier kind of paper—it crackled faintly. He peered, ignoring the bony hand of Mr. Lett, which still lay across the treasure. He whistled softly between dry lips. Bank of England notes! Fivers! Perhaps of even higher denominations!

In the start of surprise which followed this fresh discovery he jerked the cash-box, and the movement dislodged the dead man's hand. It slid away from the money and fell on the dirty coverlet of the bed.

Henry looked at it. He saw the gesture, as in a flash of bright lightning, as an omen. Mr. Lett was dead. Mr. Lett could no longer have any use for the money he had saved. The money would be quite useless to him—in fact, he had definitely left it behind, wherever he had gone.

Henry looked over his shoulder furtively, as though he feared there was someone to overhear his thoughts. They ran swiftly through his brain. Logical they were, too.

He saw, and realized acutely, one salient thing. Nobody but himself knew of the existence of this hoard. The only other person who might conceivably have an inkling of it would be the niece—but she hadn't. He was utterly certain of it. He knew the neighbourhood and the people in it too well. The niece could never have kept quiet all this time had she possessed such thrilling and romantic knowledge.

There was the matter in a nutshell. Lett was dead and the money was under Henry's eyes—the only stranger who had ever seen it.

Carefully, exerting his muscles slowly, he lifted the precious box until it rested in his arms, pressing against his thin chest. He looked down into the bundles. They were his now, if he could pull it off. The scent of them came up to his nostrils; quite a definite, distinctive smell.

He put the box on the table and closed the lid gently and noiselessly. Then he turned to the desk which stood behind the bed—a mass of papers, letters and so forth.

For two hours he went carefully through the accumulated rubbish of a lifetime. Old accounts, bills, lists of goods, addresses written on scraps of paper, on the backs of envelopes—everything imaginable in the way of personal literature. But nowhere was there a vestige of evidence concerning the existence of the cash-box and its contents. Nothing at all.

Henry sighed, for the tension was greater than anything he had ever known, and cunningly returned everything to its place. Throughout that time he had never forgotten Mr. Lett. Mr. Lett lay on the bed, dead, but not without a certain physical presence.

Henry decided against blowing out the candle. It stood away from anything inflammable, and it would look more natural if it burnt itself out—as if, as indeed was the case, Mr. Lett had been overtaken by death before he could make ready for sleep.

HE negotiated the ladder and the shop below, making no sound. The cash-box impeded his movements a little, but he strained every nerve to make his withdrawal inaudible from the street. He pulled the back-door shut, so that the lock clicked, and stood for many minutes listening to the sounds at the end of the passage-way. It was midnight, but midnight is not a period of peace and emptiness in Greton Street. There is a constant movement of pedestrians and a certain amount of traffic.

Henry was glad of this fact. It enabled him to slip out of the shelter of the passage between the houses into the wake of three people, who covered his sudden appearance in the street. With the cash-box tucked negligently under his arm he strolled up Greton Street, past Trip's, and so home to his attic. Nobody remarked him, much less his burden.

The thing was done.

It was as he had passed the ironmonger's that he had allowed his mind to look at the future; to begin the triumphant dream that had now come within the range of possibility.

He locked the door of the attic and then, sitting on the bed, turned the cash-box upside down, so that the bundles cascaded in a heap. One or two dropped on the floor and he let them lie there. It amused him hugely to think of such carelessness. He began counting.

When he had finished he sat back on his

ankles and rubbed his eyes. It was fabulous. A fortune! It would last for years and years.

Henry had no idea of big money; beyond a certain point it lost significance. The sum before him amounted to something like nine hundred pounds—little enough as fortunes are reckoned in these days—but to Henry it was the world. He thrust his arms into the bundles, and let them rest against his cheek.

It occurred to him suddenly that by rights this money belonged to old Lett's niece, but he did not permit it to trouble him. She'd never miss it because she didn't know it existed—besides, she'd spend it on gin and be robbed of it by her friends. He would find a much better use for it.

He lay for hours, dreaming. He thought a great deal about the girl in the two-seater. He began to make plans.

To begin with, he wouldn't turn up at Trip's in the morning. He just wouldn't go any more. It was the recognized way of dropping a job. Then he'd take, say, twenty pounds and buy himself an outfit of clothes. Equipped with an outer air of respectability he would rent one of those safe-deposit chests like he'd seen on the pictures, and keep the money in it, drawing it out whenever he needed it. He would live in an hotel somewhere up West, in the fashionable quarter, and then set about acquiring a semblance of education and the requisite mannerisms of high society. He would fit himself to know beautiful girls—like the girl of the car.

HE fell asleep when the sky was grey, and did not awaken until the noon whistle from the motor factory blared. He saw the money lying about him, and in feverish haste set about restoring it to the box—all save five one-pound notes. With these he would begin his shopping, bringing back the parcels to the attic against the moment when he could leave, under cover of night, for the new life.

He washed himself with a greater thoroughness than his body had ever known, and after carefully locking the attic door set forth into the world which had changed for him, so miraculously yet so simply changed. He walked down to The Pond, intending to catch a bus that would take him up the Goldhawk Road to the shops which did not know him. The sun was very bright, and the faces of the crowd were unusually pleasing; Henry marched with his head high.

On the corner by The Pond he drew up and stood with the people who were waiting for buses and listened to the fragments of conversation on the chance that he might hear something about the death of Lett. It would have been discovered by now—by his niece coming to get his breakfast, probably. Ah! If she only knew, that niece!

The traffic was thick just at this point, and a medley of cars and drays, trams and carts, filled the cross roads. There was a bit of a block for a moment, and Henry allowed his eyes to rove over the motor-cars with a pleasant sense of familiarity. There was no longer reason to be envious.

Then for the third time within a week he saw the girl in the grey two-seater—the girl who had fired his latent ambitions into such a fury of longing. She was sitting back, waiting patiently for the jam in front to unravel itself and let her through. She passed this way every day at this hour, and there was always a crush. It made her late for her father's office, where she was learning to type—just for fun.

Henry feasted his eyes on her face. Its beauty lay there, unconscious of his inquisitive glances. Now, now—he was within reach of it—soon he would be able to watch it and beauties like it as one who possesses the right. Old Lett had opened the narrow door for him, and he had passed through it. He felt suddenly breathless. constricted. It was all so very big.

Then, because the block showed no signs of clearing, and she was tired of looking in one direction, she moved her head, and looked full into Henry's eyes. There was a distance of perhaps six yards between them—not more—and every detail of the other's face must have been visible to them. Henry went very red, and made signs of recognition. He felt like a kid—and there was all his soul in his eyes.

But the girl in the two-seater did not realize it. She gazed blankly at the unprepossessing young man on the pavement and wondered what on earth made him stare so rudely. It did not occur to her for a moment that she had seen him before. He was utterly strange to her.

She tossed her head ever so slightly in disdain, making light of the matter, saw that the block had at last thinned, and slipped the gear-lever into third. The car moved, and she was carried round the corner into Greton Street.

But passing the ironmonger's she suddenly remembered the assistant who had helped her with the rattling mud-guard. It had been he, down there at the corner. Funny how one associated people with places, always. Fifty yards away from the shop she had not recognized the youth from Adam, and yet she knew his face quite well. She must remember to smile next time he was at the door. She hated snobs, and tried never to behave like one.

But Henry; Henry had allowed the bus which was to have taken him to the shops to pass without boarding it.

He stared stupidly at the pavement. There was pain, and something else, stirring in his heart. The breathlessness increased. What was the matter with him? What were these new thoughts; these doubts? Where'd they come from? Just because a girl had——? No! That was blasted foolishness! As like as not she'd just not recognized him. Her not smiling at him like she'd done before had nothing in it. Nothing. She didn't know about the money. How could she? He paused as this train of thought brought him to the question: Suppose he told her what he was going to do, what would she say—and think? Just suppose. She wouldn't like it, would she? No. She'd say it was thieving—that that wasn't the way to become a *someone*.

"Oh! *Blast!*" said Henry, uncomfortably, and turned and walked slowly up Greton Street in the direction of the shop, and Lett's, and the world he hated so much. His head was still downcast.

A voice stopped him suddenly. It was Alldyce, the policeman.

"Hullo! Lookin' for fag-ends? Heard the news about old Lett? He's dead—died in his sleep, they say. The sergeant's up there now. What's that?"

"I got something to tell you—and show you," said Henry, clearly. "Listen; last night I was down there and——"

HE explained later to the coroner's court that he had intended taking the money, but had thought better of it, and the coroner, a whiskered philanthropist, commented on his honesty and the greatness of his temptation; a discourse to which Henry listened with half an ear. He did not pretend to understand what had made him behave in that odd way, and he was quite sure nobody could ever tell him. It would remain an eternal mystery, just as he would remain—Henry of Greton Street.

And the girl of the two-seater, the grey two-seater? She kept her mental promise. Next time she passed the ironmonger's and Henry was standing at the door with his thin hands folded tightly under his dirty apron, she smiled slightly and nodded.

It was almost, thought Henry, as if she understood.

ACROSTICS.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 167.

(The Third of the Series.)

HEROIC saint and far-famed poet share
One day, when April flowers are fresh and fair.

1. Coming from here, said Caius Cassius,
   Two mighty eagles hovered over us.
2. He prefixed, get a place for fire and flame;
   Add Abram's city and find Arthur's name.
3. Three vowels and one consonant are here:
   If this should strike you, then the answer's clear.
4. Used of a pen plus what to stamps we do:
   And get a golfer now to counsel you!
5. Try three times—then there is no chance to trip:
   But in the answer you'll find cause to slip.
6. When by your art you fail to solve this light,
   This you may do and get the answer right.
7. There is a joke in this.—You get the light?
   Prepare and arm, get ready for the fight.
8. Addressed at dawn-light or in moonlight pale
   As well to skylark as to nightingale.
9. 'Tis not quite kingly, because sovereignless:
   Turn, and you get or added on to yes.
10. Add half of this to this—find royal name;
    Write half or half, the answer's just the same.
11. This is just born, the daylight being dead;
    The fairest of her daughters, Milton said.

VAL.

Answers to Acrostic No. 167 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, THE STRAND MAGAZINE, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on June 10th.

To every light one alternative answer may be sent; it should be written at the side. At the foot of his answer every solver should write his pseudonym and nothing else.

ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 166.

(The Second of the Series.)

1. A	lar	M
2. N	lagar	A
3. C	ella	R
4 I	nd	I
5. E	de	N
6. N	in	E
7 T	owe	R

NOTES.—Light 1. Or, Alarum. 4. India.

Acrostic No. 164.—"Florizel," the first gentleman in Europe, provides a good answer for the seventh light, and both "Edomite" and "Erudite" must be accepted for the fourth light.

THIRTY-FOURTH SERIES: RESULT.

ALL the acrostics were answered quite correctly by Beggar, Camwin, Junius, Rex, Stump, Tike, and Wals. Camwin did not forward his name and address with his answer to No. 164, as the printed rule required; the other six solvers win the prizes, and will receive cheques of two guineas each. They must also be ineligible for prizes in the current series.

Beggar is Mr. B. G. Pearce, 5, Ethelbert Road, Bromley, Kent; Junius is Mr. F. C. W. Grigson, Amesbury, Hindhead; Rex is Mr. A. C. Woodhouse, 13, Gledhow Gardens, S.W.3; Stump is Mr. G. W. Border, Ferndale, 18, Hamilton Road, Lincoln; Tike is Mr. S. Bacon, 15, Portman Avenue, East Sheen, S.W.14; Wals is Mr. W. Stradling, 3, Charlbury Road, Oxford.

Kenmar's Golden Day

AN EXPLOIT OF PUDGY PETE & CO.

By

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

Illustrated by
S. ABBEY

The Hon. George Vincent Angus and his old school-fellow, Peter Bragg—commonly known by his "House" nickname of "Pudgy Pete"—are conducting a private detective agency on somewhat novel lines. Peter Bragg is a man of considerable wealth, and the firm is therefore able to undertake cases where the financial rewards of success are small.

PETER BRAGG, returning from lunch, accompanied by his partner, in the middle of a somewhat slack day, found Miss Ash, the perfect secretary, seated in his special chair, speaking into the telephone. Her manner, as she looked up at the entrance of her employer followed by Angus, indicated relief. A young woman of amazingly equable temperament, she was almost flustered.

"Sir James Kenmar is waiting to see you, sir," she announced. "I was just trying to get you on the telephone."

"Kenmar?" Peter Bragg repeated. "I wonder what he wants? Show him in, Miss Ash. Have you met him, George?"

"Once or twice, but not lately. He doesn't go out nearly as often as he used."

Miss Ash opened the door of the waiting-room and spoke to its solitary occupant in a tone almost of reverence. Then she stood on one side to let him pass. He was one of the few great actors of the day whose appearance off the stage was at least as impressive as on. He had had the advantage of birth, a public school and college career, and he retained the naturalness of manner which somehow or other his understudies on the stage or in life failed to acquire. He looked hard at Peter Bragg, and, recognizing Angus, nodded to him.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed. "George Angus, isn't it? Are you a client too?"

Angus shook his head.

"Glad to see you, Sir James. No, I'm a partner in this show."

"The devil you are! Well, let me warn both of you gentlemen at once, then, that I'm here to lodge a complaint."

He installed himself in the chair which Peter Bragg had indicated. In the clear afternoon light the lines of approaching middle age were clearly visible on his handsome face. He was still, however, a very attractive-looking man.

"A complaint?" Peter Bragg observed. "I don't remember that we have had the privilege of entering your name upon our books."

"If you haven't got it one way you have another," was the prompt reply. "I suppose you know all about it. For two months now, without a moment's cessation, I have been shadowed by one of your infernal men. I have come to ask what the devil it means."

"I'm afraid, Sir James," Peter Bragg said, "that your visit should have been

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paid to Strand House. All the ordinary business is transacted there by my manager. Mr. Angus and I are here only if any special case presents itself with which my manager is unable to deal."

"I have been to Strand House. Your manager declined to answer my questions. That is why I have come to you."

"And your questions?"

"I want to know," Sir James insisted, "who this person is who has had the supreme impertinence to engage a detective to follow my movements."

"In other words," Peter Bragg remarked dryly, "you ask us to divulge the name of our client."

Sir James, notwithstanding a proverbial affability, was not always good-tempered. His tone now was almost angry.

"Client be damned!" he exclaimed. "I'll go before the magistrate if it's necessary, but I will be relieved of this infernal surveillance. What right have you to place a detective on my heels at anyone's bidding, to have my movements watched and reported upon? It's a piece of damned impertinence. I've put up with it for a long time, but I've reached the end of my patience. Now what are you going to do about it?"

Peter Bragg coughed.

"Any application to the magistrates, Sir James," he pointed out, "would be entirely ineffectual. Speaking personally, I am ignorant of the fact that we have accepted any commission with regard to you. If we have—well, I am very sorry for any annoyance you may have been caused, but you have absolutely no legal redress. If anyone chooses to pay the money to have you watched by one of my private men, there is nothing in the world to prevent our accepting the commission."

"Even if the thing interferes with my comfort and peace of mind?" Sir James demanded. "Even if I find it an infernal nuisance to have my footsteps dogged day and night?"

"There is no method of escape for you except by arrangement, Sir James," Peter Bragg assured him. "A summons was applied for once before by a man who was suing for a divorce and was being watched. The application was dismissed at once."

"In any case, then," Sir James proceeded, after a moment's reflection, "if you will not undertake to remove your man, I do insist upon knowing who it is who is having me watched."

"At the present moment," Peter Bragg confessed, "I have not the least idea myself. If you like to give me an hour or so to make inquiries at Strand House, I'll see what can be done. At present I am as ignorant of the whole affair as you are."

"At what hour, then, will it be convenient for you to see me again?" Sir James asked, glancing at his watch.

"At half-past five this afternoon or at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning."

"At half-past five this afternoon I will return," Sir James decided, as he rose to his feet. "Mind you, Mr. Bragg, I shall expect definite action on your part. I don't want to be offensive—especially as my young friend Angus is associated with you—but I have always looked upon the profession of private inquiry agent as a contemptible one, and I can assure you that I shall take vigorous measures unless you are able to relieve me of this nuisance."

Sir James departed, leaving an impression behind of dignified but justifiable anger. Peter Bragg spoke for a few minutes to Strand House on the telephone.

"Rather a domestic sort of chap, Kenmar, isn't he?" he asked Angus, after he had put the receiver up.

"I've always thought so. To judge by the number of photographs you see of him in the home circle he can't have time to be anything else."

An official from Strand House arrived presently with a little bundle of reports. Both partners studied them carefully. When they had come to an end, Peter Bragg leaned back in his chair.

"Well," he declared, "I had no idea that the life of a popular actor could be so dull. A walk in the park at half-past ten or a round of golf, luncheon at home, half an hour's sleep, and then the club. Afterwards the theatre. Then either a little supper party at which his wife always seems to have been present, or else another hour at the club, and home. My God, here's the same programme for five days following! And there isn't a single Sunday upon which he hasn't spent the whole day with his family. Who on earth is paying to have such a paragon watched?"

"We have reason to believe, sir," the man from Strand House confided, "that the name of our client is assumed. He wished to remain anonymous, but we explained that it was impossible. We address our communications to Mr. Mackinden at a post-office in Piccadilly. The money is paid always in bank-notes in advance."

"Write to Mr. Mackinden at the post-office and ask him to call here," Peter Bragg instructed. "The whole thing seems a stupid waste of time, and he is keeping one of our best men out of more interesting work."

"Very good, sir. Shall I leave the reports?"

"Yes, leave them here," Peter Bragg directed, putting them into a drawer. "I might glance them through again some time."

At half-past five Sir James presented himself once more. For some reason or other his manner since the morning seemed to have changed. If such a thing had been possible one might have surmised that he was in the least degree nervous.

"Well," he demanded, "have you made up your mind to do as I asked, and disclose the name of your client?"

"For the moment," Peter Bragg replied, "I am not able to do that, but I am anxious—we are both anxious—to meet you in every possible way. I have written to the person upon whose instructions we are acting, asking him to come and see me at once, and I am going to suggest to him that, in view of the reports we have received, this surveillance of your movements is a complete waste of time, apart from the fact that it is annoying to you. I shall ask this person, therefore, if he persists, to employ some other agency."

"And how much the better off shall I be?" Sir James demanded, with a note of anger in his tone. "What I want to discover is the identity of the man or woman who is persecuting me in this manner."

"That I cannot possibly tell you at the present moment," Peter Bragg said firmly. "After my interview to-morrow I may be in a different position."

Sir James departed grumbling, but with a rendezvous for the following afternoon.

"At half-past five this afternoon I will return," Sir James decided. "Mind you, Mr. Bragg, I shall expect definite action on your part."

PUNCTUALLY at eleven o'clock the next morning, according to an appointment, reluctantly conceded, Mr. Mackinden was announced. Both Peter Bragg and Angus received their visitor with some curiosity. Without a doubt he was in a way a personage. He was dressed in somewhat foreign fashion, but with scrupulous care and neatness. His manners were irreproachable.

"I have had dealings with your Strand House," he said, as he accepted the clients' chair and laid his hat and cane upon the floor by his side. "Through them, I understand, you wish to see me."

"It is very kind of you to have come," Peter Bragg found himself saying. "To tell you the truth, we have had a very angry visit from Sir James Kenmar, the actor."

"Indeed!" the other murmured.

"As you know, we have been shadowing him for the last two months on your account. The reports, of which you have daily copies, would seem to suggest a life entirely normal

and without incident. Might I ask if it is your wish that we should continue the commission ? "

" Naturally, until I give you instructions to the contrary," Mr. Mackinden said. " I do not understand why you should ask the question."

" You may perhaps think that we are exceeding our office in the matter," Peter Bragg remarked, after a moment's pause, " but Sir James seems to have become cognizant of the fact that he is being followed, and he strongly resents it. The reports we have handed to you are all of so inoffensive a nature——"

" Pardon me," Mr. Mackinden interrupted. " The reports which you have sent me have been full of interest."

Peter Bragg was for a moment nonplussed.

" But the man's a model," he pointed out. " There isn't a place he has visited or a thing he has done which could be regarded as in the least degree suspicious."

Mr. Mackinden contemplated for a moment the end of his shining patent shoe.

" It appears to me, Mr. Bragg," he said, " that we are slightly at cross-purposes in this matter. I take it that you are responsible for making the inquiries, and I for forming an opinion upon them. Your reports have afforded me information which I desired. I am absolutely pledged to their continuance. If, therefore, the object of your sending for me is to say that you wish to retire from the business, I can, of course, employ another agency."

Peter Bragg considered the matter.

" Perhaps, on the whole," he decided, " you had better do so. We have kept a faithful record of the movements of a well-known person for some two months without discovering any reason for such surveillance. In those circumstances, as the person in question has expressed himself annoyed, we should prefer to discontinue our efforts. We are sorry to lose a client, Mr. Mackinden, but Sir James is a person entitled to some consideration."

Mr. Mackinden rose to his feet.

" You are perfectly within your rights, Mr. Bragg," he acknowledged. " I shall at once issue instructions to another firm."

" That," Mr. Bragg replied, " must be as you wish. Before you leave, however, I should like to ask you this question. Sir James is most anxious to know at whose instructions he has been shadowed for the last two months. Am I at liberty to tell him ? "

There was a flash of anger in the visitor's cold grey eyes.

" I should look upon your doing so, sir," he pronounced, emphatically, " as a gross breach of confidence."

" That ends the matter, then," Peter Bragg assured him.

" To enable me to conclude my arrangements without any lapse," Mr. Mackinden begged, turning back from the door, " will you continue your operations on my behalf until midnight to-night, and make up your report until then ? "

" Certainly," Peter Bragg acquiesced. " Our man is still on duty. I will give instructions that your commission stands until midnight."

The door closed behind Mr. Mackinden.

" Queer-looking Johnny ! " Angus ruminated. " Seemed like a foreigner of some sort, except that he spoke such perfect English."

Peter Bragg nodded thoughtfully. He was engaged in studying the reports once more, to see if by chance any significant fact could have escaped him.

SIR JAMES presented himself that afternoon at the appointed hour. He was as distinguished and as good-looking as ever, but the slight fit of nervousness from which he seemed to have been suffering on his previous visit was still evident. His first question was sharply asked, and there was a note of anxiety in his tone.

" Well, have you found out who this person is who's wasting his time and money on me ? " he demanded.

" I have had an interview with our client," Peter Bragg confided. " We do not know, however, whether he is acting on his own account or on someone else's, and I regret to say that he point-blank refuses to allow us to disclose his identity."

" You mean that you can't tell me who he is ? "

" I am very sorry, but I'm afraid we can't. On the other hand, I intimated that we could see nothing in the reports we had submitted to warrant your being exposed to annoyance, and I have therefore told him that from midnight to-night our engagement with him ceases."

" He will only go somewhere else," Sir James muttered gloomily.

" That, I am afraid, is a fact," Peter Bragg assented.

Sir James looked steadily at a calendar across the room.

" Mr. Bragg," he said slowly, after a few moments' pause, " you don't want to lose a good client, I suppose. Let me make a proposition to you. Continue the commission on your own account. I promise you I will make no further complaint, but—grant me this one favour—let me be a free

man for one day—Thursday next, the seventeenth of October."

"I'm afraid I couldn't do that, Sir James," Peter Bragg pointed out. "If I accept the commission, I must accept it in its entirety."

The actor rose to his feet. It was evident that he was greatly disturbed.

"I shall consult my solicitor," he threatened. "I cannot see why anyone should be exposed to the nuisance and humiliation of this espionage."

"It would be a very reasonable thing to do, Sir James," Peter Bragg agreed. "I'm afraid he won't be able to help you, though."

Sir James turned towards the door. Half-way there he paused, frowning. For a moment or two he remained deep in thought.

"Mr. Bragg," he said, "if there is no escape from this damnable espionage it would perhaps be better if you continued to act, for the present at any rate, on behalf of my unknown enemies. The idea of a further detective agency being dragged into the matter is simply ghastly. I withdraw my protests. Earn your fees from your unmentionable client, but——"

It was evident that at the moment Sir James was almost inclined to extend a certain measure of confidence to his two companions. For no obvious reason, however, he changed his mind. He departed with a farewell glance at the calendar, but without another word. Peter Bragg and his partner exchanged a quick look.

"Better send word round to Mackinden that we'll continue the commission," was Peter Bragg's only comment.

ANGUS, by chance rather at a loose end one afternoon towards the end of the following week, wandered into his club at about six o'clock and played a couple of rubbers of bridge. He had just decided, in common with some kindred spirits, that the hour for a first cocktail had arrived, when a note was brought to him. It was dated from the Imperial Theatre, and consisted only of a few lines :—

"Dear Mr. Angus,

"If you should happen to be disengaged this evening, you would do me the greatest possible favour if you would spare me half an hour of your time. I enclose a stall for the show. As you may know, I do not appear in the second act, and have an hour to myself. If you would come round to my room at the fall of the curtain in the first act, I should be deeply grateful.

"Sincerely yours,

"JAMES KENMAR."

Angus scrawled a hasty reply, went home and changed, and at half-past eight was at the theatre. The house, as usual, was packed; the play—by a famous playwright—was an established success, and Kenmar, as the shrewd but kindly diplomat, full of small and lovable humanities, kept the house enthralled. At the end of the first act Angus found a man-servant waiting for him in the lobby, and was taken round to the actor-manager's room. Kenmar, still in his make-up, with a dressing-gown in place of the Court dress he had been wearing, received his visitor with a cordiality which was almost pathetic.

"It's awfully good of you to come, Angus," he said. "Put the whisky and soda on the table, Richards, and leave us. Come back in time to get me ready."

The man, swift-footed and dexterous, produced decanter, soda-water, tumblers, and cigarettes, and arranged them upon a small Georgian sideboard.

"See that I am not disturbed," his master directed, as he prepared to leave the room. "You had better remain somewhere about to stop anyone coming in. I saw one of those newspaper men in front to-night."

"I will see that no one disturbs you, Sir James."

The man departed, closing the door noiselessly behind him. Sir James crossed the room and turned the key in the lock.

"That makes a certainty of it, anyway," he remarked. "Help yourself, Angus. I never take anything until the show's over, but I'll smoke a cigarette."

He lit one, and stood upon the hearthrug looking down at his guest.

"Angus," he continued, "you may think my appeal to you a little extraordinary, considering the fact that we are really scarcely more than acquaintances. Still, I must have a confidant. I'm up against a very terrible crisis. You can take it that I am consulting you, if you will, as Bragg's partner, or as a friend. I *must* have help."

"I'll do what I can," Angus promised.

The slight mannerisms of the actor had fallen away. Sir James told his story as a man face to face with trouble.

"I am fifty-six years old, Angus," he confided. "The papers all lie about my age, but that's the truth. I've been married twenty-four years. I don't need to say anything about my wife. She is one of those sweet, even-tempered, good-dispositioned women who were born to do the right thing, to give their lives for their children and their husbands, and who haven't a selfish impulse in their body. We got on all right—I suppose I was no better nor any worse than most other men—rather

better, I think—until one winter eight years ago in New York."

Kenmar paused and changed his position restlessly. Angus, seeking to analyse some faint and unaccountable difference in the man's tone and demeanour, suddenly realized that for the moment the actor existed no longer; it was the man speaking out of his body—the man, a stranger.

"I was out there with my company," he went on, "successful as usual, making money as always. It was the ordinary life, which had suited me very well up till then—fêted a little, flattered a little, entertained all the time. One night I was taken to a small reception. I met a woman there whose name had driven mine out of the newspapers for several days. I spare you her name; she was a Russian, a princess, and a good deal more of that sort of thing. I will call her Vadia. She became that to me that night. I have never thought of any other name. Angus, this is getting damned difficult."

The wonderful voice had actually broken. Angus nodded across at him sympathetically, but remained silent.

"I've never spoken of her to anyone else," Kenmar continued. "To another man it sounds—wrong. I haven't any words to make it sound right. You see, in a way I'm a queer sort of person for such a thing to have happened to—a popular actor, cramped in life and ideas from one's very environment—a little of the manhood squeezed out here, a little of the imagination from another place. You know what we are, the finished article. I didn't know then; I do now—enough to despise what we may drift into being. . . . Well, the next day she disappeared. She had to. With the utmost regret in the world the New York police had to tell her that they couldn't defend her. She had stayed on in Russia with one purpose. Again I sha'n't weary you. She killed the man who betrayed her family before she left, and in London and Paris and over there she's done more harm to the Bolshevists than any man or woman who ever escaped from that country alive. She went into hiding; I went with her. The newspapers were full of my sudden illness. Fortunately my understudy was good. I was with her until she went to South America. I crept back to the hospital in New York, finished up my tour abruptly, and came back to England."

THERE was another silence. For a simple story, Angus felt the unspoken eloquence of it vibrating in the atmosphere of that queerly modern apartment—the actor's dressing-room, with its lingering odour of unguents and flowers and stale cigarette smoke, the dressing-table with its mummer's outfit, the masculine trifles here and there, the faint note of unreality which not even Kenmar's masculine enough personality had been able to dispel.

"I don't know what there was in me of hidden greatness," he went on, after a moment's pause, "which brought us together with the first flash of her eyes, the first word she spoke, the first thrilling touch of her fingers. You'll have to take all that for granted, Angus. It has happened to people all through the ages, and even now no one understands. Only this I must have you know and believe—since that moment eight years ago I've lived three hundred and sixty-four days of each year waiting, and one day in the most marvellous paradise God could create. Once every year—the anniversary of that night in New York—we've met. She's come sometimes from the farthest corners of the world. We never write. She knows where I am, and she comes. The understanding is that I never ask for her whereabouts, I never follow her. Twice I have been in outlandish places on the morning of the day, but my message has always reached me. And all these eight years, Angus, she has lived in peril of her life. Some day or other the end will come. Perhaps no one will ever hear of it. You'll see the change in me. Last year, on our last meeting, for the first time in her life, there was a little less fatalism, something that was almost like the shadow of fear in the way she spoke. All over the world they grow richer and stronger, her enemies. She was hounded out of China, escaping death by a miracle. They had a flash of genius at last, these men. When they lost track of her they came to Paris, where I was. They were a day too late. Our wonderful twenty-four hours had passed and she was away. This year—now do you know, Angus," he demanded, passionately, "why those men of yours who day after day make their harmless report of my little life are filling me with terror and horror? They know that if she's alive, nothing will keep her from coming and me from going when the day comes, so they watch me to bring about her doom."

His finger shot out towards the calendar upon the wall.

"The sixteenth! To-night, before I leave the theatre, I shall have my message. It was at five minutes to one that I met her in New York. At five minutes to one to-morrow morning I shall be with her for twenty-four hours—just twenty-four hours out of the whole year. My understudy will play to-morrow night. I shall be suddenly indisposed. That is, if I go."

"Don't you see?" Kenmar cried out. "When I leave here to-night I lead those confounded sleuth-hounds to her hiding-place."

"If you go?" Angus repeated, a little dazed.

Kenmar was suddenly ablaze. He stood up. Not even the sound of laughing voices outside in the corridor stopped him. He struck the table with his fist.

"Don't you see?" he cried out. "When I leave here to-night I lead those confounded sleuth-hounds to her hiding-place. She will pay for the rapture of our love with her life. Who do you suppose is your nameless, your infamous client? One of that damned nation of murderers, his fingers itching for her throat, his steel for her body."

"My God!" Angus muttered.

There were sounds of increased movement outside, a warning knock at the door.

"In ten minutes, Sir James," his man-servant announced.

Kenmar made no reply. His eyes, filled with a passionate demand, were fixed upon Angus's. The sweat was standing out in little beads upon his forehead. He was like a man gripped in the sway of some terrible emotion. Upon their speechlessness came the anticlimax of a furtive knock on the door. Kenmar crossed the room and unlocked it. The man-servant entered, bearing a note.

"A messenger has brought this for you, Sir James," he announced.

Kenmar snatched at it. He held it in front of him—a simple address in violet ink, scratchy characters, a blot in the corner. He held it in front of him until the door closed behind the servant. Angus gazed at him almost in awe. The storm had passed. The joy on his face was the joy of a child. His lips were quivering, his eyes

suddenly youthful. Great actor though he was, there was an emotion here which even his art could never have reproduced as he tore open the envelope and read the few enclosed lines. Angus rose to his feet. He crossed the room and, although they had never been anything more than acquaintances, he passed his arm affectionately round the other's shoulders.

"You can go where you will to-night, Kenmar," he promised. "No one shall follow you. You can take my word for that."

Kenmar gripped his hand. The gratitude in his face was more than the gratitude a man gives for a life saved.

ANGUS paused outside the stage door of the theatre to light a cigarette and consider the situation. There was an entire act of the play yet to be produced and a reasonable interval to be allowed for Kenmar to change his clothes. The act, however, was the shortest in the piece, and as it had already commenced it was scarcely safe to reckon upon more than half an hour's grace. Unconsciously, during the next fifteen minutes, he paid unwilling tribute to the sagacity of the myrmidon from Bragg's Detective Agency of whom he was in search. There was certainly no one who had the least appearance of loitering about in the street, no one who fulfilled in the slightest degree one's idea of the modern sleuth-hound. Angus began to get worried. Supposing the fellow should make his appearance only at the last second, there would be no time to talk to him. Then he suddenly realized that a fashionably-dressed young man, who had just said good-bye to another at a corner of the narrow street, had turned back towards the stage door. Something in his bearing was at once familiar. Angus hurried after him.

"Saunders," he said, touching him on the shoulder, "I want a word with you."

"I thought you did, Mr. Angus," the other replied. "That's why I sent my pal away."

"Your pal? There aren't two of you on this job, are there?" Angus demanded.

"Certainly not, sir. If I can pick up one, though, I always bring a dummy round for a minute or two. It looks better to be seen talking to someone than to be hanging round alone."

"Well, I'm glad I've found you, anyway," Angus declared. "You can cut out to-night's work. We've decided to abandon our commission."

"You mean," Saunders asked, slowly, "that you don't wish me to follow Sir James to-night?"

"You've got it exactly."

The man threw his cigarette away, but he showed no signs of moving.

"You'll excuse my pointing out, Mr. Angus," he said, "that when I left the office my instructions stood. Have you seen Mr. Bragg or Mr. Hopkins during the last half-hour?"

"I have not," Angus replied, "but you know quite well what my connection with Mr. Bragg is. I am in a position to give orders if necessary, and I do give them to you now. In view of circumstances which have come to my knowledge during the last hour I have decided to take you off this case."

Saunders reflected for a moment.

"You're putting me in a very awkward position, sir," he complained.

"You will be in a far more awkward one if you don't obey my instructions," Angus assured him.

The man glanced towards the front entrance of the theatre. A thin stream of people were already coming out; the whistles were beginning to sound.

"I'm sorry, sir," he decided. "I've had special instructions about this evening. I've been told to be more than ordinarily careful. Our client has promised me a double fee for my report to-night."

"There won't be a report," Angus insisted.

The man had made up his mind.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but there will," he answered.

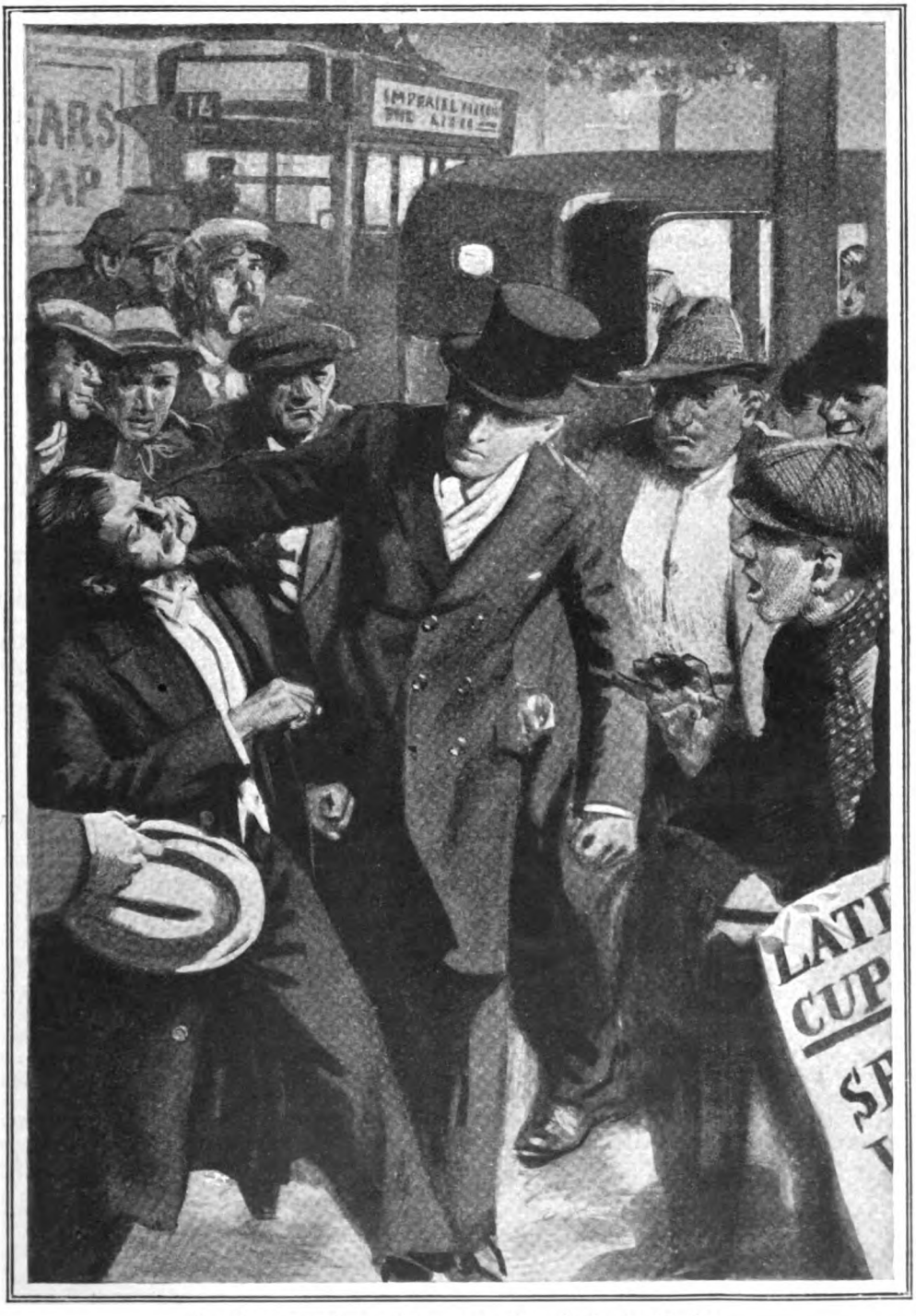
Angus glanced up at the stage door. Under the light a tall, familiar figure was standing, pausing for a moment to say good night to the doorkeeper. He laid his hand upon his companion's arm.

"Look here, Saunders," he promised, "I'll see you through this if you do as I say. I'll guarantee you your place and a hundred quid if you'll come round with me to the Savoy and have a bit of supper."

"Nothing doing, sir," the man replied, turning away with a stealthy glance towards the passage leading from the stage-door.

"Then look out for yourself," Angus warned him, with a little groan.

Saunders turned round to meet Angus's fist in his face. Exactly as the latter had calculated, with the first sting of pain he saw red and forgot everything else for the next few moments. There was a scream of delight from the newspaper boys and loiterers of that ilk. "Two toffs fighting outside the Imperial Theatre!" An irregular ring was formed in a few seconds—and the two men fought.



Saunders turned round to meet Angus's fist in his face.

PETER BRAGG, in the midst of an annoying and disturbing morning, looked up at his partner's entrance with a little gasp of dismay. Angus had a black shade over one eye, a piece of cotton-wool strapped on to his cheek, a swollen lip, and his arm in a sling.

"My God, what have you been doing with yourself?" he exclaimed.

Angus sank into a chair.

"You should see Saunders," he murmured, with a reflective smile.

"Where have you spent the night?" Peter Bragg demanded. "I sent up to your rooms and over to Moningham House."

"In a police cell," was the cheerful reply. "So did Saunders. Only way to keep him with me, you see. I say, Pudgy, be a good chap and give me a whisky-and-soda. As a matter of fact, I haven't been to bed at all. I came straight here from the police-court. A chemist patched this up last night, but I've got a nurse coming in ten minutes with a doctor pal to fix me up properly."

Peter Bragg rose to his feet, unlocked his cupboard, and mixed a generous whisky-and-soda. He prepared for himself a sherry-and-bitters.

"I think it only right to let you know, George," he said, stiffly, after a mechanical exchange of greetings, "that you have placed the reputation of my business in considerable jeopardy. Mr. Sodor Mackinden has been here twice already, besides ringing me up at my rooms last night. He is threatening to bring an action. And so far as I can see he will be perfectly justified if he does."

Angus drank half his whisky-and-soda and handled the tumbler containing the remainder lovingly.

"Mr. Sodor Mackinden, as he calls himself, is the representative of one of the rottenest branches of the Bolshevist Secret Service, and what he's out for is nothing more nor less than murder," Angus confided. "It ain't our job, Pudgy, to work for such scum. Still, I admit, on the face of it, you've got a grievance. Here's the story."

Angus told it, pithily and without undue verbiage. Peter Bragg listened to the end in silence. He was indubitably impressed.

"But, George," he protested, "surely it was a bit rough on Saunders—a man who was only doing his duty in our employ—to start a brawl with him in the open street, to say nothing about the damage to your own reputation? What happened?"

Angus grinned.

"I got five pounds or a month," he confessed. "Saunders would have had the same, but I took the blame for the whole affair—said I lost my temper."

"Five pounds or a month!" Peter Bragg repeated in a shocked tone. "Why, what on earth will your father say?"

Angus finished his whisky-and-soda.

"I've got it on the governor all right," he replied. "He went to prison for three days without option on a boat-race night thirty-five years ago. He's got the clipping still—seems rather proud of it. Saunders is the only fellow I'm sorry for. He's terrified to face his wife. You'll have to give him a certificate that it was all in the course of business, and I'm going to choose him a gold cigarette-case this afternoon. It's all right, Pudgy, eh? You're not going to chuck me out?"

Peter Bragg shook his head.

"In the circumstances," he said, "accepting Kenmar's story as the truth——"

"Upon which I'll stake my soul," Angus murmured.

"——I should have done precisely the same as you—provided I had the physique, and provided I couldn't have made Saunders see reason," Peter Bragg concluded. "Go up and have your wounds dressed. I'm expecting another visit from Mr. Sodor Mackinden, and you'd better not be in evidence."

ON his way to his club that evening, Angus paused for a moment outside the Imperial Theatre to read a freely-displayed notice:—

"Owing to the sudden but not serious indisposition of Sir James Kenmar, the part of Lord Dagmar to-night will be taken by Mr. Philip Groves."

Angus turned away with a somewhat wistful smile. A little thrill of romance stole pleasantly through his being. He felt his feet raised from the pavement. He was no longer conscious of any pain from that scar on his cheek. Somewhere under that grey sky which leaned down upon him murkily a great passion was burning.

(*Next month: "Working Backwards."*)

The Sherlock Holmes Prize Competition

RESULT

The prize of £100 has been won by Mr. R. T. Norman, Spring Hill, Wellingborough, Northants, who correctly named ten stories of the twelve selected by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle as the best. Seven competitors chose nine stories rightly, while a great number were correct with eight. One hundred autographed copies of "Memories and Adventures" have accordingly been sent to competitors.

In the following article the creator of Sherlock Holmes gives his selection of the twelve best stories, together with his reasons for the choice.

Arrangements have been made to republish the first six of these in "The Grand Magazine," beginning with the July number.

HOW I MADE MY LIST

By A. CONAN DOYLE

WHEN this competition was first mooted I went into it in a most light-hearted way, thinking that it would be the easiest thing in the world to pick out the twelve best of the Holmes stories. In practice I found that I had engaged myself in a serious task. In the first place I had to read the stories myself with some care. "Steep, steep, weary work," as the Scottish landlady remarked.

I began by eliminating altogether the last twelve stories, which are scattered through THE STRAND for the last five or six years. They are about to come out in volume form under the title, "The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes," but the public could not easily get at them. Had they been available I should have put two of them in my team—namely, "The Lion's Mane" and "The Illustrious Client." The first of these is hampered by being told by Holmes himself, a method which I employed only twice, as it certainly cramps the narrative. On the other hand, the actual plot is among the very best of the whole series, and for that it deserves its place. "The Illustrious Client," on the other hand, is not remarkable for plot, but it has a certain dramatic quality and moves adequately in lofty circles, so I should also have found a place for it.

However, these being ruled out, I am now faced with some forty odd candidates to be weighed against each other. There are certainly some few an echo of which has come to me from all parts of the world, and I think this is the final proof of merit of some sort. There is the grim snake story, "The Speckled Band." That I am sure will be on every list. Next to that in popular favour and in my own esteem I would place "The Red-Headed League" and "The Dancing Men," on account in each case of the originality of the plot. Then we could hardly leave out the story which deals with the only foe who ever really extended Holmes, and which deceived the public (and Watson) into the erroneous inference of his death. Also, I think the first story of all should go in, as it opened the path for the others, and as it has more female interest than is usual. Finally, I

think the story which essays the difficult task of explaining away the alleged death of Holmes, and which also introduces such a villain as Colonel Sebastian Moran, should have a place. This puts "The Final Problem," "A Scandal in Bohemia," and "The Empty House" upon our list, and we have got our first half-dozen.

But now comes the crux. There are a number of stories which really are a little hard to separate. On the whole I think I should find a place for "The Five Orange Pips," for though it is short it has a certain dramatic quality of its own. So now only five places are left. There are two stories which deal with high diplomacy and intrigue. They are both among the very best of the series. The one is "The Naval Treaty" and the other "The Second Stain." There is no room for both of them in the team, and on the whole I regard the latter as the better story. Therefore we will put it down for the eighth place.

And now which? "The Devil's Foot" has points. It is grim and new. We will give it the ninth place. I think also that "The Priory School" is worth a place if only for the dramatic moment when Holmes points his finger at the Duke. I have only two places left. I hesitate between "Silver Blaze," "The Bruce-Partington Plans," "The Crooked Man," "The Man With the Twisted Lip," "The 'Gloria Scott,'" "The Greek Interpreter," "The Reigate Squires," "The Musgrave Ritual," and "The Resident Patient." On what principle am I to choose two out of those? The racing detail in "Silver Blaze" is very faulty, so we must disqualify him. There is little to choose between the others. A small thing would turn the scale. "The Musgrave Ritual" has a historical touch which gives it a little added distinction. It is also a memory from Holmes's early life. So now we come to the very last. I might as well draw the name out of a bag, for I see no reason to put one before the other. Whatever their merit—and I make no claim for that—they are all as good as I could make them. On the whole Holmes himself shows perhaps most ingenuity in "The Reigate Squires," and therefore this shall be twelfth man in my team.

It is proverbially a mistake for a judge to give his reasons, but I have analysed mine if only to show any competitors that I really have taken some trouble in the matter.

The List is therefore as follows:—

THE SPECKLED BAND
THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE
THE DANCING MEN
THE FINAL PROBLEM
A SCANDAL IN BOHEMIA
THE EMPTY HOUSE
THE FIVE ORANGE PIPS
THE SECOND STAIN
THE DEVIL'S FOOT
THE PRIORY SCHOOL
THE MUSGRAVE RITUAL
THE REIGATE SQUIRES

DOG IN WOLF'S CLOTHING

By

K. N. BURT

Illustrated by
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IN reaching the shallow ford, Jock Baird had reached the last trenchant step of his journey. He sat down, therefore, in the shadow of the cottonwoods and, grey as a rock, his hands hanging between his knees, he stared across the sliding water at that trail which would lead him to the consummation of his stark and absolute desire.

When, for ten years, a man has allowed himself but one emotion, he is no longer conscious of it as a feeling; he has become, rather, its embodiment. As a scabbard is possessed by its sword, so was Jock's being possessed from hilt to point by his two-edged longing for revenge. His outer man was a fine scabbard enough, though devoid of decoration; a noticeably well-made scabbard of choice material from which the original colouring had been drawn, less by weather, perhaps, than by the absence of it; a scabbard, let us say, of strong and supple leather, engraved by the fierce, colourless point of pain.

Baird's blue eyes were deep and patient; they rested quietly on the trail which went up like slender smoke amongst its aspens. The water, wide and shallow, marched past him in regiments of level light. It had a marching murmur, too, broken occasionally by the chuckle of its loose stones. Baird's mind, satisfied by the imminence of his event, was calm. He rolled and lighted a cigarette, inhaled its smoke, breathed it out soberly. He wondered, almost idly, as though he had been any other man, if Scott had managed to get that other homestead, the one that would give him command of this whole little fruitful valley. He had the best bit now, of course, water-supply and grazing, but one ranch without the other was like a right hand without a left, or a voice singing without accompaniment. Most likely he had got it. Scott had a way of getting what he coveted —somehow—somehow.

Baird settled back more comfortably against the log, shifting his loaded gun for greater ease. He did not change the pose, though every muscle stiffened, when a little girl appeared walking down to the water from its opposite bank. She came slowly along that trail, swinging a bucket, looking vaguely about as a child will, ready to be diverted from duty and amused. She did not see the silent watcher until she had dipped her bucket, then she gave an uncertain little cry.

"How you scared me!" she added in another key almost immediately. "I thought you was—Doyle—settin' there like that."

Baird stood up, his flannel shirt moving visibly over his heart, and spoke to her quietly across the running stream.

"You're Alice," he said.

"Yes, sir." She smiled up with a good, young smile, pushing back her hair, glad that he knew her name.

"Alice Baird," he repeated, but, at that addition, her smile clouded.

"No, sir. Alice James."

The blood crept slowly up from the brown collar of Jock's flannel shirt to the dark point of his clipped hair. The man of one emotion had built himself no defences against any other feeling. He reacted instantly, without forethought or hesitation, finding himself across the shallow stream with the child held fiercely in his arms.

"Your name," he was telling her through his teeth, "is Alice Baird. Baird—Baird!"

She did not seem very much frightened, though she bent her soft body back from him a little.

"But my father's name is James—Scott James," she said.

"So *he's* your father, is he?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mother living?"

"Yes, sir. She's up to the house."

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"You like your father?"

The blue-eyed little girl looked her surprise. "I—I dunno. I reckon," she answered vaguely, her attention even while she spoke diverted by a bird fluttering its wings in the pool below her, "nobody couldn't hate him."

Baird gave her a sharp smile. "Couldn't, eh?" He clutched her again. "How'd you like to come away with me?"

"You ain't one of these here kidnappers, are you?" asked Alice, her eyes coming back from the bird to him, their azure insouciance stained with some suspicion.

"No. But your name isn't Alice James. Your name is Alice Baird, and that means you're my gal, and I aim to take you off with me."

With a pucker in her forehead the child stood, still as wood in his hands. She had grown pale.

"But what about my poor mummer?" She glanced up swiftly with an air of sharp and rosy relief. "Here she is a-comin'—comin' down——"

Baird dropped her and fled across the ford, blotting out his leanness behind the nearest cottonwood. At that abrupt act the little girl, for the first time, became afraid. She wailed out loudly, her voice keen and high in the still woods.

"Oh, mummer, mummer, come quick!"

The woman ran, knelt, held her closely, looked this way, that way, with dark eyes of fear.

"Darlin', who scared you?" Her voice dropped. "Was it—*Doyle?*"

"No, mummer." Alice seemed now completely reassured. "'Twas a strange tall man. He wasn't scarin'—'cept when he moved so quick. He said my name was Alice Baird."

The woman knelt there, silent.

At last, "It's—my—Jock," she said, and by the tone of her voice changed that lonely and dangerous wilderness into a sheepfold, fenced and guarded, to which the shepherd has returned.

She rose slowly, luxuriously, as though she had received largess of leisure, and gave Alice a gentle little thrust.

"Take the water up to Pa," she said softly, absently. "Give him some in the dipper. He's thirsty. Run along."

Alice went up the hill, changing her bucket from one hand to another and looking back always as long as the trees allowed it at her "mummer." After she had gone out of sight and hearing, "Oh, Jock!" called the woman softly. "Jock!"

"I'm here, Jenny," he said, and stared at her across the marching stream.

Her voice fell away into the silence. She added after a little, very low, "He's gone."

Behind his cottonwood Baird stood, beating his fist lightly, repeatedly, against his throat. He had shut his eyes. His Jenny was dead. This was never Jenny. Jenny had been round and straight. Jenny had held up her small head, bright, black, and quick like a singing bird's; Jenny's red mouth had been a bud resisting summer; there had always been a brave colour in her cheeks. He caught his hand down, opened his eyes, straightened, and strode out upon the bank.

"I'm here, Jenny," he said, and stared at her across the marching stream. Man and wife of ten years ago they looked—and Jenny smiled.

"I'd have known you. Prison ain't been as hard as—life." She made a sad, exhibiting gesture, showing him the change in her, showing him, too, that she recognized it fully.

"Come over here," she said.

His hand fell on his gun, the fingers closing tightly, and when she next spoke her voice was a mother's overwearied with the passion of a child. "Oh—come!" she said.

He came, and, standing close, looked down into her eyes.

But—there was Jenny—the beautiful Jenny, differently changed: a wise and patient Jenny, a Jenny with her bright, strange cruelty lost, her wildness taught, a

Jenny who could never tear a man's heart as she had once torn his with lack of understanding, patience, charity. It was strange how he found her again in her eyes, and it was strange, too, how with those dark eyes to light him he recognized her small singing head, her long throat, and her body under its disguise. It was as if young Jenny stood there in rags and ashes, trusting him to know her in spite of all—trusting him!

"Say what you got to say," he told her. His face was like a wolf's.

She spoke up to him serenely, looking straight into his cold and cloudy eyes.

"I believed you did that killing, Jock. I did believe it, Jock. And it scared me of you—in a way—that and your hardness. It was awful difficult to believe against the evidence, and you didn't help me even with one word—and, I guess, I couldn't believe without a little help from you. I was so used to bein' helped by you. And then, you see—Scott loved me. He was a better lover in those days than you. When you had been in prison with no word for me, when I'd waited a long time—it seemed long, Jock—I married him, as you know. I got my freedom from you and I married him." She stopped for a very long, deep, sighing breath. "A while ago, when he was angry with me, angry enough to want to hurt me bad, worser than usual, he told me what he'd done. He told me how he'd kept silence at your trial, how he hadn't told the one fact that would have proved you innocent. Scott didn't know who did the shootin', but he knew *you didn't* do it. And he let you go to prison for manslaughter, so's he could get me—for himself. Since that time he told me—I've known."

BAIRD had to send out a brave messenger to catch his voice for him. It was a hoarse captive. "How long ago was *that?*"

She moved her head from side to side, looking up at him.

"Four weeks ago—four weeks."

"And you didn't leave him?"

"No." She still looked up at him, sad and true and steadfast. "I wrote to you. You never opened my letter?"

The stream marched to music and the leaves moved. She turned.

"Come up and see him."

"*You* are askin'—me—to come up?" He had loosened his gun, and, looking down at that gesture, she smiled patiently and shaped her lips to "Yes."

Bewildered into a temporary submissiveness, he followed her, but after a few steps she dropped back and put her hand on his arm. So they went on, side by side.

All through his body, as once he had felt the shame of manacles, now he felt her touch. It grew down into his flesh, sent out its fibres all along his veins. Small fingers, a hand with warmth and weight, whose movements he remembered like the motions of a pet, a hand that had caressed, been playful, tender, cool, remote; a hot hand that had clung to his for all one night of fever and pain; a gentle hand, confident, surrendering. But it had hurt him, too, that hand of Jenny's—just by taking itself away it had twisted humanity out of his heart, making a werewolf's of it, something unnatural, un-dead. Now, as he walked beside her up the path, he realized, though he had never made this part of his articulated plan, that he had meant to kill her too. Scott James, certainly, but, in secret, he had meant to kill that bitter young Jenny. James had robbed him of this hidden core of his revenge. Bitter, little, beautiful Jenny was dead already, though some essential sweetness had saved her from his own more hideous transformation into a living death. In God's name, how could she trust him so?

In his wonderment he actually stopped beside her there for an instant. How could she set her hand on his arm and walk beside him? Stumbling once, he felt her pressure, looked down to catch something almost like a smile. She looked happy. By Heaven, that was the woman's look! *Happy!* There was colour in her face. Those eyes—he'd seen a dog look like that. Could she be *glad* of his return? But he was on his way to kill Scott James, and she must share punishment. She must be made to suffer. He'd leave her with her dead traitor, taking her baby with him, killing that insane trust once and for ever out of her eyes—confident eyes, almost smiling lips, that had once denied him their belief. Hadn't he trusted them and been deceived? Now he'd teach her how trust can twist itself to ashes at a stake of disillusionment. All this his brain said in curt, iron syllables. But, meanwhile, his heart and blood, the natural man of him, were conscious only of her hand upon his arm.

THEY went more slowly as they came towards the end of the steep trail. James's log house, built in an hour of guilty triumph, the house of a successful thief, was at once prosperous and secret—a sleek little house of peeled logs and plaster strips, pattered upon by aspen shadows, sun-flecks, and falling cones. It was clean inside and out, cleanly curtained, dutifully kept, but no flowers grew on its sills or about its step, the clean curtains were faded, no chair or bench had been set out under the trees to face the wide, majestic mountain distance. Here was a house that

had never been loved by any woman—that house of a thief.

In the clearing just in front Baird stopped. He freed himself.

"You know what I came here to do?" he demanded in a low voice, cautious of his enemy.

She glanced at his gun, then into his face.

"To—kill—Scott?"

"Yes."

"And you still mean to kill him?"

"Nothing could change that, Jenny, not a messenger from God. That's grown into me. It's kept my hand from rot. Where is he?"

"Inside. You'll not shoot him at sight—without warning?"

"I'll shoot him. But I'll tell him first that he's going to die. I want him to know who kills him."

Her big eyes stared at him out of a white and whiter face.

"Go in, then."

She stepped aside for him.

"You ain't true even to him, are you, Jenny?" he said, softly, and went past her, his shadow loping first, in at that widely-opened, unsuspecting door.

The boards across which his prompt shadow lay were wide, they led to a fireplace where a log burned. Between Jock and the burning log stood just one object, a low log chair, cushioned to hold a prostrate body which, though Jock's step was heavy enough to shake the boards, did not look up nor turn.

Jock saw a greyish head, a sharp high nose. The blood thundered in his brain. His gun made itself ready.

"I'll shoot him. But I'll tell him first that he's going to die. I want him to know who kills him."

"Scott James!"

No answer, no stir. He felt chill, the red mist turning to something grey. Through it he made his path round the chair to stand in front of its silent occupant. There lay a twisted form, a warped face, its mouth sagged sidelong, paralysed, withered, one-eyed. Jock's gun hand turned cold.

"Scott—James!" the avenger muttered, huskily.

He could not see whether that one dull open eye recognized him or not, but there was a muffled sound as though a mired log had struggled to give human speech, and one of the hands flapped like a dying fish. Alice had spilled water down the beard, across the shirt-front. Water lay on the floor beside his chair.

Jock went back slowly from his enemy, step by step, until he came against the door-jamb, where he stood, holding with his hands. Gradually the sickness of shock was warmed, overcome by the dull rage of his

baffled brain. That act for which ten years had been a patient fostering, that emotion which had grown to be himself, it seemed to him that he must die of its sudden impotence. The punishment of a thief had been inflicted by a heavier hand than his own. No death now but would be merciful. What could a bullet do for Scott James but give him liberty ?

Jock lifted his head, straightened, steadied himself out through the door, and stood before that cabin staring at a twilight larger than any human life. Disappointment cramped him into its cell ; he had lived between grey walls, under iron hands, for just one moment of ferocious ecstasy, and the moment had been taken from him.

He realized that Jenny stood there beside and had been speaking to him, low and fast.

" He's been like that for four weeks, Jock. Now you know why I couldn't leave him. It came upon him sudden—that night after he'd told me what he'd done. Perhaps it was the shock of seeing me change. I don't know. He hadn't realized, I reckon, what the truth would do to me—how it must bring *you* back. He was angry. He just wanted to hurt. He'd often been cruel. He hadn't been a lover for a long while. Oh, Jock, I had known him for ten years, and my gratefulness, my pleasure in his love for me, had worn itself away. I tried to keep on. I wanted to be true, at least, to him. Just as you said, Jock. I didn't want to have to tell myself : ' You couldn't be true even to him, could you, Jenny ? ' So I tried, though he was dull and harsh, suspicious-like. He'd strike Alice sometimes, for nothin', for her blue eyes, I guess, like yours. So, at first when he told me the truth, how he'd suppressed the evidence that would have cleared you, Jock, I was glad. Oh, God, I was glad. It freed me. I could go—with Alice, our Alice—go back and make my peace with you."

" Sure of me, weren't you, Jenny ? "

It made her silent for an instant, then she said, slowly and sweetly, " Yes."

JOCK waited, still looking at the darkening hills. She went on again presently, like a brook that has gone over and about a stone.

" I was glad that day, all that day, and he saw my gladness. I guess I didn't try to hide it. He got more and more anxious, scared, angry—I don't know what. He flung out and chopped wood in the hot sun. All the afternoon he chopped. Later, I heard him drinking at the well. Terrible thirsty he must have been, to drink like that. I was cookin' up supper. He come in and stood at the door. He began to speak, loud and queer, and his words were all wrong, thick, and not even the words he meant to say. It was horrible. Then he moved towards me, fell down. There he lay like a log, breathing queer. All night he was the same. In the morning he was—like this. He's been so ever since. Four weeks. He's not able to say my name, nothin' you can understand. I can't move him. I can't leave him. There ain't no doctors for a hundred miles. I've got no money to travel with. Could I go away and let him die ? Could I, Jock ? "

He let her wait for an answer, wait until the last colour went out of the west, leaving that big star there to brighten splendidly. All about and below them there was a climbing darkness, that made the hollows visible as in the deep places of a sea. The forest outlines were lost in that tide. The land became at the same time more knowledgeable and more obscure, its essential characters made more distinct, its details obliterated, as a man's nature is simplified by strong emotion and clouded simultaneously with all the mystery of the essential human soul.

" I am going to leave you now," Jock said.

He did not look at her, white-faced in the dusk.

" But, Jock," she wailed out after him, as though incredulous, " you don't understand. I'm *scared*."

He did not pause, but he heard her following just as a lonely dog will follow, hoping to be taken, remembered.

" It's—*Doyle !* "

AT that he did stop, arrested by the mere fact of a repetition. Doyle, the child had said ; Doyle, Jenny had said when she had come to the rescue of the child, and now " Doyle " she had repeated as an explanation of her fear. He stood in his stride and listened to her again without looking down at her or back. She stopped just behind him, talking in the same quick, soft, and certain key, as though she told things to God, her Father, in the night.

" He's trying to scare me out. He threatens me. Every two or three days he'll come. I don't know when to watch out for him. He says he'll drown Alice. He says he'll shoot me. He says—after I'm dead—Alice can be his girl. He says he'll burn the cabin down at night. Scott helpless, heavy like a log—maybe I couldn't drag him out. He says he'll start the forest blazin' and run us down the country like a lot of rats—Scott can roast in his chair, he says."

" Who's Doyle ? "

" The man that has the lower ranch, Jock. He took it up about the same time—

just before—Scott claimed this one. He meant to get the two of 'em. He wants them. Ours is best, water and grazin'. We control the stream, you see. The two places would be worth something. You could raise cattle fine, make money, I guess—crops—it's fine land. This ranch alone is pretty good; with his, it would be a rare proposition. A man could plough and plant acres. He's got the best livin' site and good garden soil, and his place kind of commands the country outside, and it's a better winter place too, sheltered for stock. He wants we should get out and leave him this. He's tryin' to scare us out. He knows I'm alone now. He could kill me easy enough, Jock. Who'd know or care? It'd be no job to fix it like an accident or an illness—away off here—months before any chance passer-by got in. Or he could kill Scott, do almost anything he liked with me or Alice. Once a year maybe some trapper wanders in—a hunter in the Fall. Twice a year I could manage to get down to the trading station for my orders. I'll have to ketch up the horses myself now, and the last two days they've not been hereabouts. I reckon Doyle's driven 'em off, got 'em corralled. I'll have to go up to his place and see. That scares me, too. Up there, somehow, I'll feel he had me, like a spider. You know, I'd be sort of trespassin' into his web. He'd get me—sure."

"Like the law got me," said Jock. "Your fear is your own look-out, Jenny. You chose your man while I was in prison. If he can't watch out for you, that's not my business. Good-bye."

She started, perhaps, to put her touch on him again, he seemed to see a shadowy motion of pale hands, but he did not really look. He went on, this time unfollowed, and as he went he tasted a bitter reminiscent sweetness of revenge. Let Doyle do his job for him against that Jenny, carry her off to his web and wrap her round. If she had believed in him, had loved him enough to resist Scott, to make Scott sure in his soul that she could never be won, this fear would not have been her destiny. No fear would have touched her. But, unconsciously or half-consciously, Jock began to look about, remembering the child. She hadn't been in the house. He must stay about and find her. She mustn't be left to Doyle, not Alice——

The brain of the prisoner and the heart of the free man were at each other's throats, both vigorous and snarling, wolf and watch-dog broad awake.

Jenny was no longer following him, she had stayed back there, silent, in the dark.

He had nearly reached the ford when he heard a horse's hoofs beyond it. A man was riding slowly towards the stream; the bulk of him and his beast emerged against a palish opening of sky; the horse's head disappeared as he dropped it to drink. Hidden, Jock made out the rider clearly enough in that open space, with all that was left of daylight full upon him. So this was Doyle.

By his aspect, he confirmed Jenny's story and justified her fear: not that there was anything spidery about him, nor even ogreish, but, as he sat his horse, slouched, heavy-handed, bulky of hip and shoulder, under-lip thrust out, glumly staring, his outlines were expressive of an insensate and immobile obstinacy, a sort of blind and single-hearted greed, of which cruelty must be a living part. Undoubtedly he'd have his way about that ranch. Jenny, frail and small and tired, Jenny with her man-log and her girl-baby, had no chance against his stolid intention. She was the victim. No hope of rescue.

DOYLE jerked up his horse's head, swore, and, using an unnecessary spur, splashed noisily across the ford and rode past Jock so closely that a hand stretched out from either man would have made them acquainted. He went on up, unknowing, however, to threaten, to bully, perhaps, to-night, to fulfil one of his threats.

Instinctive acts are far more common than acts of pure volition, since feeling dominates the reactions of the mind and feeling runs as swiftly as electric currents along the accustomed wire of any ancient habit. Ten years of brooding lay light as a film of dust on the nerve-centres of Jock Baird's active life. There had once been a Jenny, small and soft, a Jenny Baird.

The fidgety, climbing horse with Doyle across his saddle made slow progress compared to the lean swiftness of a watch-dog, springing, instinct-driven, up towards his sheepfold among the secret trees.

Before the log cabin, its windows dark save for the gleam of a dying log, Doyle dismounted. He loosened the gun against his thigh, simply from habit, no doubt, moved forward, heavy and portentous, careless, for he had nothing to fear, but big with his own triumphant frightfulness. A bully has moments of purest pleasure. Doyle must have been happy knowing how that small woman would start and tremble at the first shock of his voice. It boomed forth as sudden as a nightjar's wings.

"You—in there! Here's Doyle. Come out of that. I want to settle with you. You there! Jenny!"

"I'll come out and speak to you fast enough, you big animal," said Jock, a little breathless, "but first put down that gun."

Doyle froze, then plunged straight for the doorway, an action for which Jock, meaning to turn him back to where his own voice sounded from among the near-by trees, was not prepared. Sheltered in the doorway, that startled bully turned about, his gun ready, moving uncertainly.

"Who are you, damn you? Get out. Stand back. Let me see you once. I'll fire."

PERHAPS Doyle thought the miracle had happened and that Scott James had returned to life and threatened him out there in the dark. Jock made his way as softly as he might among the trees until close to the house he made a dash for it, using the angle of the wall for a protection. As he flashed across that six-foot space Doyle fired, then turned his gun to the opposite corner, as though he imagined the mysterious enemy would run about the house and attack him from the other side. Jock took advantage of this error instantly, leaped forward, and fell upon Doyle, pinioning him by both arms. In the doorway, at random, the gun went off. There was a faint cry from Jenny within, but Jock did not hear it; he was fighting with all the accumulated ferocity of the stifled and tragic energy of ten inactive years. Doyle's panic had made any diplomacy impossible, even if Jock himself, emotionally off his balance, had been capable of attempting it.

They went, the two big men, staggering back, thrashing about amongst the trees and rocks, down the hillside trail, down towards the water, past Doyle's snorting horse, tearing at each other's flesh, twisting each other's limbs, fighting as men fight when they forget that they are men, dog at a wolf's throat, wolf with his fangs bared, a fight on Jock's part of sheer release of pent-up agony, and on Doyle's of furious panic as though a spirit of the woods had fallen upon his neck. He did not know this man; it might be Scott James, or his ghost, or some insane stranger, but, whoever it was, it fought with an iron and unwincing patience as though it knew itself tireless and invincible.

By the stream Doyle went down, and there the watch-dog pinned him to earth.

After a minute of hard breathing, of wrenched control, Jock spoke.

"You been tryin' to scare Jenny from her ranch?"

"Who in hell are you? Damn you—yes."

"She has a good right to this homestead, and you know it."

"I reckon."

"You counted on her having no man to look out for her."

"There is her husband, ain't there?"

"He's dead—as good as dead. You never heard that Jenny had a real man once, I reckon."

"No."

"Well, she had. He's here now atop of you. Shall he kill you, you dirty, woman-scarin' hound?"

Jock fought with the long-fostered murderous intention in his brain. It was strange, in all truth, that he was able to master it. He had been planning for ten years to kill. What saved him probably was that, not being at heart a killer, his victim's heavy-breathing helplessness, the fear in his body under Jock's mastering weight, gave natural compunction its full power.

"Now, you got to quit this game. I'm here—until you quit. You can hold your own land, but you got to keep off hers. And bring back the horses, damn you, and damn' pronto, too. What'll you swear?"

"To—keep—off Jenny's land."

"And to give up all notion of scarin' her out of it?"

"I give up, all right. You're killin' me."

"I'm not. I'm just not. I've got your gun and another of my own. I'll let you up. I'll take you to your horse and set you on him. Then I'll run you down this trail, shootin' at your pony's hoofs. Swear you'll not let yer ugly face be seen again acrost that ford."

Doyle, sobbing, swore.

Afterwards Jock kept his word. He dragged his man up to the pony and got him, groaning, into the saddle. With a shout and a blow, he turned them loose, the horse went plunging headlong, and his gun barked like a hound upon the scent.

It had all been brief as the foray of a wolf, not half an hour of snarling tumult. Afterwards, the night released its sounds of tranquil wind and running water.

JOCK bathed his eyes, his throat, his arms in the cool stream, then lay down on his face there in the grass. He was quite emptied of ferocity as though he had been bled. Only he wanted Jenny. It was so long since he had been comforted.

Presently he rose. There was no courage in him to follow back the hard trail into the world. Rather, step by feeble step, weak with a sort of despair, he dragged himself up to what might have been his home.

Jenny was waiting. She stood outside, came forward to him, held him there before he reached the clearing in the darkness of the pines.

"Don't go any farther, Jock, not yet." He waited, with a numb, unillumined brain. "Doyle fired twice, didn't he? The second

They went, the two big men, staggering back, thrashing about amongst the trees and rocks, down the hillside trail.

time—that bullet—Jock—it killed Scott. He never knew. He's dead. He wasn't even startled, not for a second, suffering or afraid. He's dead."

As Jock straightened, knowing himself a free and guiltless man, with a woman to win and a reputation readily to be cleared, she leaned more and more against him and began to caress him with her hand. It reached his face, stroked it, trembled against his cheek. He knew that she was looking up, he could feel her searching eyes.

" Jock—you looked so dreadful, grey and still, like a wolf. But, somehow, I couldn't be afraid. No more than Alice. I couldn't help but trust you. You see, I kind of *knowed* your heart." She dropped her head against it, justified of faith.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PULP MERCHANT

By

G. R. MALLOCH

Illustrated by
E. F. SHERIE

"I THOUGHT," said Ongar, after a glance up and down the table, "that parties like this weren't given any more."

The lady to whom the remark was addressed glanced at him sideways and said absently, for she was still busy with the appearances of her fellow-guests: "You thought that dinner-parties weren't given any more? Surely——" Her voice trailed off as she noted a wonderful emerald collar on the thin neck of an old woman.

Ongar noticed that her attention was wandering. That could not be allowed so early in the course of a meal. After the fish, perhaps; but surely she ought to devote herself to the last drop of soup to the man who had brought her in. Was he not a very eminent and interesting man, quite youngish, with a waistcoat only just beginning to give way under the pressure of several best sellers and half-a-dozen successful plays? He was all that and more, he assured himself: the wanderer must be brought back to the fold of his personality.

"Dinner-parties—no; but dinner-parties of such dimensions. Why, there must be twenty people here."

The lady came back reluctantly; she hadn't caught his name in the hurried introduction that followed his late arrival. It suddenly flashed upon her that he must be someone of importance because he arrived late and did not seem to care in the least. She looked at him with new interest.

"You don't like large parties?"

"On the contrary, I prefer them; they are so much more intimate. Only one thought that they had gone out with, say, Queen Victoria."

The lady looked a little bewildered. But she knew how to listen, and that was why she was so popular.

"More intimate? But how can that very well be the case?"

"Simply because at a party of this size anything like general conversation is impossible. Therefore it resolves into a series of *tête-à-tête* conversations. And that is either very interesting or very boring—there is an exciting element of gambling about these large parties."

"Well, then, what is our interesting conversation to be about?" asked the lady brightly, feeling that he might be somebody worth humouring.

"I don't know," said Ongar, realizing that he had caught her attention at last and no longer caring about her. "I think that I made a bright opening and that the next move is yours."

"Listening is my strong suit," replied the lady. "And as I am not taking soup, I could give you my undivided attention for some time, for I see that my other neighbour seems to think that he has found something prettier."

"In that case," said Ongar, "though I lament the lack of perspicacity shown by your neighbour, I suppose I must shine. I

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had rather hoped that you would. But here goes. Don't you think that the real interest of these occasions lies in the absolute diversity of the assembled guests? Look down our table—soldier, sailor, stockbroker, tailor—yes, why not? Tailoring is a business like any other. Just imagine how differently they have spent this day. That man five down on your left on the other side of the table, for example, is a Pulp Merchant, and have you any notion of what the day of a Pulp Merchant is like?"

"I have not," said his neighbour.

"I knew one once," said Ongar. "I could tell you a story about a Pulp Merchant."

"Do!"

"Very well. (Thank you, Burton, I will take sherry.) My Pulp Merchant lived in the suburb of Hamptoot. That is, perhaps, not its real name, but it will serve to explain the character of the place. The Hamp element was fairly well off, lived in artistic houses, and patronized classical concerts and the higher drama; whereas the Toots lived in long rows of small houses built as flats and were much given to rushing about on motor-cycles with side-cars attached."

"I can see the place, I think; but was your friend a Hamp or a Toot?"

"He began life as a Toot, made money, established his own business as a Pulp Merchant, married a Hamp, and became one himself to outward seeming. But there still ran in his veins beneath the veneer of culture the wild blood of a Toot. I see that your neighbour means to claim your attention, he is crumbling his bread so determinedly—and I fear that mine also has decided to be polite. While we are absent, you may imagine that I have passed over any further unnecessary details and brought my hero to Sweden."

"WELL, here we are again. You had taken your friend to Russia, had you not—or was it Sweden?"

This will never do, thought Ongar: I am surrounded by bores and must fix this woman's attention, for I like to hear myself talking.

"Sweden, I think. Sweden gives the story an original touch. None of our novelists writes about that country because they do not know Swedish. But one day some enterprising youth will learn Swedish and, sitting in the British Museum Reading Room, surrounded by works of reference, write a thrilling tale of Swedish peasant life."

"Without having seen a Swedish peasant?"

"Oh, certainly! Enthusiasm about people one has never seen is easy and perhaps natural; one feels that they *must* be better than those one knows. But do not let us wander from the theme. My Pulp Merchant, who, by the way, wore whiskers, was rather fat, and a Dissenter, travelled to Sweden in order to acquire a forest which was for sale. Pulp, as you probably know, is made from forests."

"Indeed!"

"Have you ever been in a Swedish forest? No? Neither have I, but they are lovely. Picture to yourself stately avenues of pine, solemn and quiet as an empty cathedral; groves of graceful larches like emerald against bronze in their spring greenery; the woods sloping down to a crystal-clear lake in the unruffled calm of a glorious May morning; a lonely but magnificent scene, backed by great mountains; and imagine what an effect it had upon my Pulp Merchant when he found himself seated on a sunny rock, after an invigorating swim in the lake.

"(Indeed, Sir Charles, I have heard every word you have spoken—I was commenting to my neighbour upon the nature of the eloquence which has earned you such a well-deserved reputation.)

"That, I think, will settle Sir Charles. Where was I?"

"What effect had this wonderful scene upon your Pulp Merchant?"

"A double one. As a Hamp, he felt that the prospect was one upon which the most cultured might look with enthusiasm. As a Toot, some wild adventurous strain in his blood began to assert itself, a primitive urge to deeds of adventure. Romantic longings filled his soul; the same urge that in earlier days had caused him to career about on a motor-cycle without a silencer, tootling violently upon the horn."

"And who was the woman?"

"You are quite right—she is coming. But Lady Poters is about to address some remark to me. Do not forget that it was Sweden, not Russia."

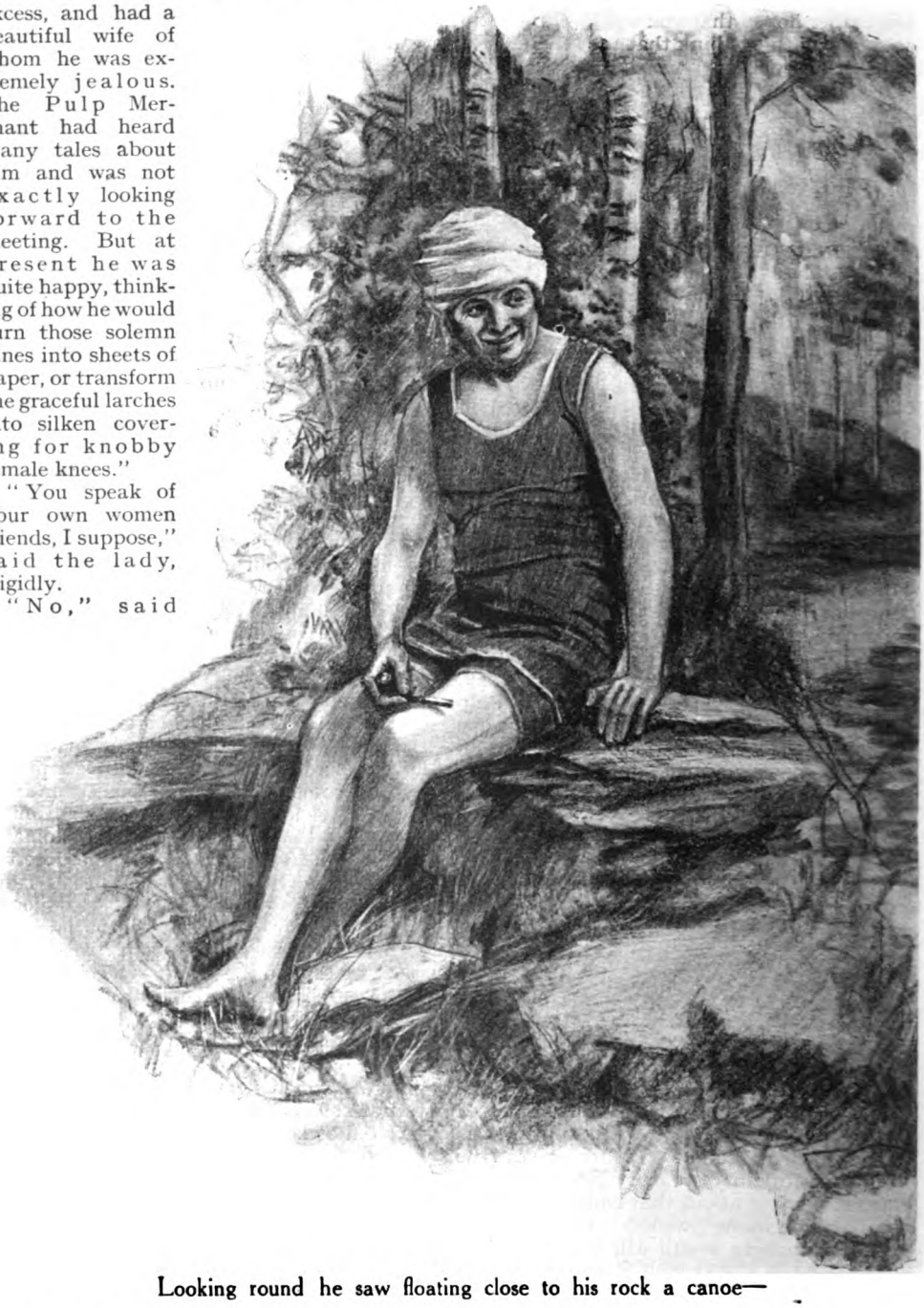
Having silenced Lady Poters in five minutes, which he thought a record, Ongar turned to his neighbour again. And she, interested at last by the approaching woman, broke off her conversation to listen.

"Did I tell you that the Pulp Merchant had come to Sweden to buy a forest on the estate of a Baron? Baron—let me see—something ending in Strom. Let us call him A-Strom to distinguish him from some other Stroms who come into the tale. The Swedish nobility were noted in the past for their turbulence, historians tell us. The Baron could only be described as a survival. Turbulent was the only word for him. He was nearly seven feet high, wore a flaming red beard, ruled the countryside like a tyrant, hunted, drank, and gambled, all to

excess, and had a beautiful wife of whom he was extremely jealous. The Pulp Merchant had heard many tales about him and was not exactly looking forward to the meeting. But at present he was quite happy, thinking of how he would turn those solemn pines into sheets of paper, or transform the graceful larches into silken covering for knobby female knees."

"You speak of your own women friends, I suppose," said the lady, frigidly.

"No," said



Looking round he saw floating close to his rock a canoe—

Ongar, "of my enemies. Where was I? Ah, the Baron——"

"I ask you for the woman and you put me off with a Baron."

"Forgive me, but we must set our scene before the drama begins. (Yes, champagne, please.) The reverie of our Pulp Merchant was disturbed by a slight splashing sound. Looking round he saw floating close to his rock a canoe; and in the canoe was quite the most beautiful creature he had ever seen."

"What had she on?"

"A very exiguous bathing dress which outlined the perfections of her figure to an extent that startled our friend from Hamptoot. She had shingled golden hair, blue eyes, a lovely complexion, and her skin was as white as snow. Hamp gazed at her with real admiration—Toot longed to seize her in his arms and carry her off to the depths of the forest."

"I hope that this story is going to be quite proper."

"Perfectly. Most moral. Like so many films, it shows how a good man was saved by means which might suggest an opposite probability. Alas, I fear we must unbend to our neighbours again."

Ongar said this because he saw approaching a dish to which he wished to give undivided attention. Having enjoyed it, he resumed his narrative in a refreshed and benevolent mood.

"Imagine a gracious smile, a stammering speech from Hamptoot, a little laughing conversation, for the lady speaks English fluently, the discovery that the stranger was an Englishman, talk as idle as the May morning, sparkling eyes—two happy

—and in the canoe was quite the most beautiful creature he had ever seen.

children of Nature forgetting the world for a moment. Imagine Pulp, slightly rotund, with a towel tied turban-wise round his head to keep the sun off the bald spot. Imagine all sorts of things, and at last two persons in the canoe, one being given a lesson in paddling.

"A May morning of that kind is a May morning anywhere in the temperate climes, but in a beautiful foreign land it is perhaps even more Mayish. Anyhow, they sit facing each other, hands touch, even knees touch in the course of the lesson. The lady's canoe carries cigarettes which have to be lit. Hamp strives to be noble, but Toot clubs him—in a word, he kisses her. It is a May morning and she returns the kiss. He returns it—she returns it—when suddenly they hear a noise like a roaring bull coming from the opposite shore of the lake. Our Pulp Merchant observes with alarm the figure of a tall man with a red beard brandishing a gun. Near him on the road is a car.

"'Surely,' gasped the Pulp Merchant, 'surely that must be the Baron A-Strom?'

"'It is the Baron,' said the lady, turning very pale. 'He will shoot—we are lost.'

"'But why?' asked her alarmed friend.

"'You do not understand. He is my husband. He is very jealous, and has sworn to kill any man he finds flirting with me.'

"'Then—you are the Baroness A-Strom?'

"'Did you take me for a peasant girl?' demanded the Baroness with what seemed to her companion unjustified asperity. 'Our only chance is that as he is short-sighted he may not have really recognized us. We must paddle for our lives.'"

HERE Ongar broke off to converse with some people opposite; it seemed a wise move, in case his listener's interest was flagging. But when he came back he found her all eagerness.

"What happened?"

"The Baron leaped into his car, but the road turned inland and he was lost to sight for a few minutes. They rounded a point and saw before them a river flowing out of the lake. The lady explained hurriedly that they would be able to land in the woods on the river bank and escape by paths she knew. But the current was stronger than she anticipated: they were whirled away from the place, they could not stop the canoe, and all they could do was to guide it past stones and trust to luck. 'Now,' gasped the Baroness, really frightened, 'he may catch us!' And the Pulp Merchant saw the Baron's car shooting madly along the road now parallel with the river. He shouted imprecations, but they were swept out of his view at a bend of the stream.

"The soul of Hamp was troubled at the predicament in which it found itself; the soul of Toot brandished a paddle and was full of delicious excitement. And so the chase went on; they were powerless to stop in that current; every now and then the Baron's car shot into view, only to disappear round a bend of the road. And at last the Baroness said that they were safe for a time, as the road went inland for miles. But they could not stop their vessel and were borne relentlessly forward to an inevitable meeting."

"Do you believe all this?" asked the lady politely.

"Of course not," said Ongar. "Men do exaggerate so when it comes to stories of travel. One must make allowances, even for a Dissenting Pulp Merchant. But the most astounding part of his adventure is yet to come, if you care to hear it."

"Do go on."

"At last the canoe floated on a quiet stretch of the river near a little village. On one side of the stream was a landing stage; beyond that ran a long white wall, and over the wall they could see the towers of a castle half-hidden among great trees. The road ran between them and the white wall, and in the white wall there was a green door. They scrambled ashore and the Baroness looked about her.

"'It is the Baroness B-Strom's castle,' she said. 'She would hide us—but she's the devil for gossip.'

"At that moment the honk-honk of the Baron's car became audible.

"'Run, run!' cried the Baroness. 'We must get in there—by the door if it is not locked—or over the wall.'

"The wall was high and the Pulp Merchant did not see how it was to be climbed. 'Honk! Honk!' said the car, louder and nearer. But as they reached the door they heard another sound—the sound of innumerable voices, laughter, and clapping of hands.

"'Heavens!' cried the lady in dismay. 'Adela is giving a garden *fête* to-day. I should have been there if I hadn't met you! And the Duke is present!'

"A cloud of dust appeared travelling rapidly towards them. The Pulp Merchant tried the door; it opened. 'Get inside,' he said; 'anything is better than being shot in one's bathing costume.' And he dragged her inside and shut the door. They heard the car whirl past."

"And where were they?" demanded the lady as Ongar selected a peach.

"They were in a vast garden. A few yards from them was a sort of natural stage, a raised lawn surrounded by shrubbery, on which a number of talented Swedish ballet

dancers were giving an exhibition of their art. In front of this, at some little distance, sitting or standing in a semicircle, was what the Pulp Merchant describes as a regular Ascot crowd—top-hats, tails, wonderful frocks—in fact, the aristocracy of the country-side grouped round a very distinguished-looking gentleman. And Pulp had the feeling that he was having one of those bad dreams in which you find yourself in the street with nothing on; in truth, he and his companion had really very little on. They stood petrified. And then suddenly a little round of applause broke from the Ascot crowd. And once again a woman's quick wit saved the situation.

"'They take us for dancers,' she said, grasping his arm. 'Wake up—see, the others have finished and leave the stage. Follow me—do as I do—dance for your life! It is the only thing.'

"And she ran from him a few steps and then turned and beckoned alluringly.

"OUR Pulp Merchant—may I give you a peach?—our Pulp Merchant, as a leading citizen of Hamptoot, had spent many weary hours at the Russian ballet in London, after a hard day's work in the City. And in a moment it dawned upon him what she was doing. He responded nobly. He put his hands on his hips and leaped into the air as high as he could go, twirled round several times, and ran after her. She eluded him, he leaped again, and a few bounds brought them on the stage amid polite applause. But there it wasn't so easy. The Baroness danced like a fairy; what her partner did was compounded of the hornpipe, a Scotch reel, and confused recollections of the Russian ballet. He got giddier and giddier, and at last the Baroness whispered to him to catch her. She threw herself into his arms in an attitude of surrender. The applause was enthusiastic; they bowed and bowed; and just as she was whispering to him that now they must bolt, an officer came running across the grass to them. The Baroness disappeared behind a bush; the officer bowed and addressed the Pulp Merchant, who knew just enough Swedish to understand that somebody wanted to speak to him. A tall figure had detached itself from the crowd and was striding towards him.

"It was more like a nightmare than ever to Pulp. He found himself bowing before the distinguished-looking man, who carried a pair of field-glasses in one hand and looked at him with a mischievous smile. He addressed the trembling merchant in Swedish. Pulp stammered that he was English and knew little of that tongue.

"'May I ask your name?'

"'Pulp, sir.'

"'Ah, yes, of course—Pulp, the famous English dancer,' said the tall man to the officer. He added something in his own language, and the officer produced a little case from which the Great Personage took a pearl tie-pin.

"'The performance of yourself and your accomplished companion has given me great pleasure,' he said to Pulp. 'She must be exhausted, and I will not trouble her, but in the name of Art I will ask you to accept this little souvenir.'

"And stepping towards the astonished Pulp he pinned it into the towel still arranged turban-wise on his head. And while he was doing this, he said in low tones, 'Mr. Pulp, beware of the Baron! Fortunately I was the only one of the company who had a pair of field-glasses—no one else has recognized her. Get your friend home, if you please, and tell her that I understand everything, for I saw the beginning of the adventure from my car on my way here.'

"He left our friend too petrified to speak or move; but as his eyes followed the retreating figure, he saw emerging from the castle in the distance a tall man with a flaming red beard. The sight was enough to recall him to his danger. He found the Baroness arguing with the Swedish ballet people, who appeared to be annoyed about something. But this was no time for argument; he dragged her away and told her what had passed, and of the approaching Baron; and they fled down a long alley of the park till they found another wall and a door, through which they emerged into what was unmistakably a barrack-yard. They crouched behind a bush as a sentry strode past, and then dived into an open doorway and found themselves in a dwelling-house.

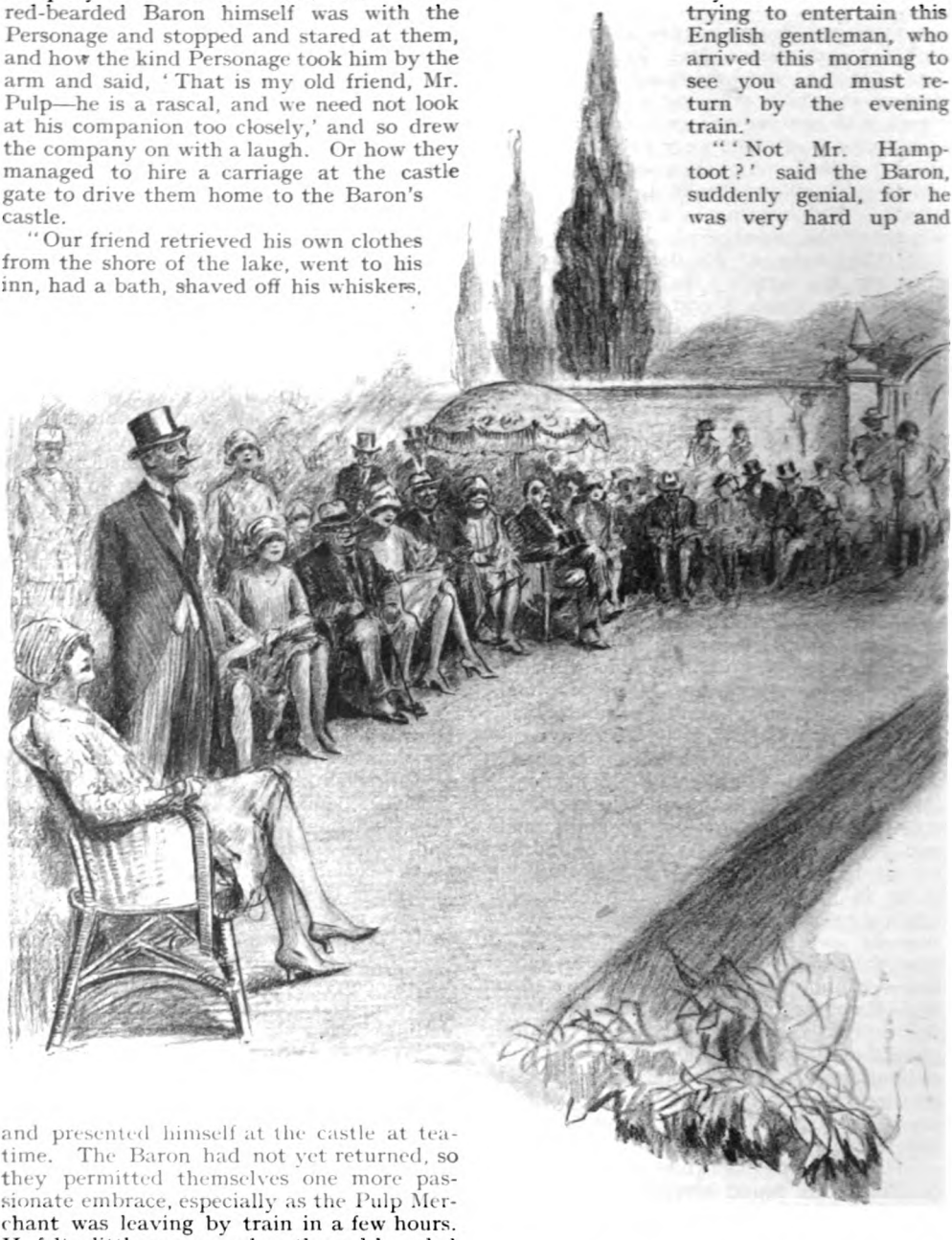
"The Baroness looked relieved. 'This is Colonel C-Strom's house,' she said. She did not pause to explain how she knew the house or its geography; but her guess that everyone was out looking at the *fête* seemed to be correct. She pushed Pulp into a bedroom and told him to find clothes and get into them; she disappeared into another.

"Our friend wasted no time, as you may imagine. And as he emerged, clad in an old civilian suit, he saw coming down the stairs a servant-girl in peasant costume. For a moment he thought all was lost, but the girl took his arm and laughed in his face. Her golden hair was hidden by a large lace cap, she wore clumsy boots and stockings, and her eyebrows were blackened and her face rouged to a peasant red.

"'Now you may kiss me,' she said. And he did. But I can see that our charming hostess is thinking of getting up, so I must

curtail the story of their adventures, skip the beguiling of the sentry, and only mention how in the park again they came face to face with the Personage and a brilliant company in one of the walks, and how the red-bearded Baron himself was with the Personage and stopped and stared at them, and how the kind Personage took him by the arm and said, 'That is my old friend, Mr. Pulp—he is a rascal, and we need not look at his companion too closely,' and so drew the company on with a laugh. Or how they managed to hire a carriage at the castle gate to drive them home to the Baron's castle.

"Our friend retrieved his own clothes from the shore of the lake, went to his inn, had a bath, shaved off his whiskers,



and presented himself at the castle at tea-time. The Baron had not yet returned, so they permitted themselves one more passionate embrace, especially as the Pulp Merchant was leaving by train in a few hours. He felt a little nervous when the red-bearded Baron strode into the drawing-room and demanded of his wife where she had been all day.

"The Baroness was reclining on a sofa. She gave a little yawn, indicating intense boredom.

"'I have been nowhere but here, Gustavus,' she said, rather wearily. 'And my day has been devoted to trying to entertain this English gentleman, who arrived this morning to see you and must return by the evening train.'

"'Not Mr. Hamptoot?' said the Baron, suddenly genial, for he was very hard up and wanted the money for his forest. 'Indeed, I must apologize!' And he shook hands and went to fetch the necessary papers. But at the door he swung round.

I could have sworn that I saw you in a canoe this morning, Gertrude—with a strange man!'

His wife sighed wearily.

The Baroness danced like a fairy; what her partner did was compounded of the hornpipe, a Scotch reel, and confused recollections of the Russian ballet.

"'It must have been some of the visitors from the hotel,' she said. 'You know you are getting very short-sighted, Gustavus—you should see an oculist.'

"'I think I had better,' said the Baron, enigmatically, as he went out. But he did not refer to the subject again. And that," concluded Ongar, "is the story of a day in a Pulp Merchant's life."

The lady looked thoughtful. "It must be an exciting kind of business," she said. "I have been thrilled. Do you mind if I ask you just one thing—was the hero of your story by any chance the Pulp Merchant who is sitting on the other side of the table—the man you pointed out to me?"

Ongar looked attentively at the Pulp Merchant. He saw a good-natured, commonplace, unromantic face, decorated with whiskers over an expansive shirt-front.

After all, why not endow the fellow with a halo in the eyes of one woman at least? He decided that he would.

"Yes," he said. "Since you ask me, that is the very man."

The lady looked more thoughtful.

"Strange," she said. "You see, that man really *is* a Pulp Merchant. And he is my husband. And he has never told me anything of this adventure."

The hostess had risen. As Ongar stood aside gracefully to allow his companion to pass, he gave her one of his most brilliant smiles and said: "How splendid! He will be so much more interesting to you now!" But a little later, when the host proposed an adjournment to the drawing-room, he made his excuses.

"Be sure, my dear fellow," he said to his protesting host, "that only the most urgent reason for being elsewhere could induce me to leave you."

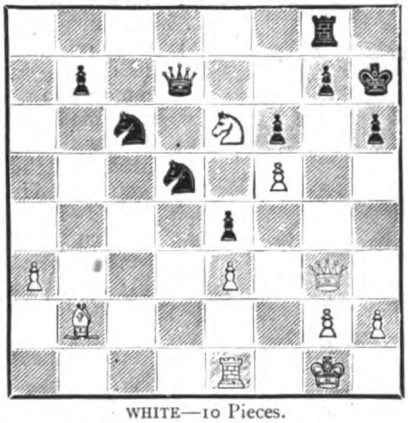
PERPLEXITIES.

By HENRY E. DUDENEY.

856.—LUCK IN ADJUDICATIONS.

IN club and county chess matches unfinished games are sent to experts for adjudication, which, of course, can only be made on the merits of the position

BLACK—10 Pieces.



WHITE—10 Pieces.

White mates in three moves.

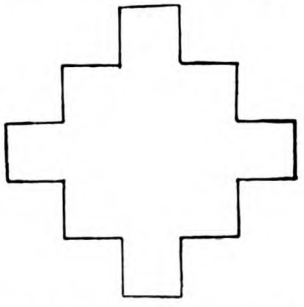
if played between two masters. A player is thus often given a win or a draw where he might actually have lost over the board. I give such a position where the adjudicator recently gave a win for White, since he has a forced mate in three moves. It is clear White did not see this, or the game would have been finished, and it might have ended very differently. How is the mate effected ?

857.—ACCOMMODATING SQUARES.

CAN you find two three-figure squares, no noughts, that when put together will form a six-figure square number ? Thus, 324 and 900 (the squares of 18 and 30) make 324900, the square of 570, only here it happens there are two noughts. There is only one answer.

858.—MAKING A SQUARE.

HERE is an elegant, but not difficult, little cutting-out puzzle that will, I think, interest my readers. I



think it is due to Mr. E. B. Escott, of Chicago. Cut the figure into four pieces, each of the same size and shape, that will fit together and form a perfect square.

859.—THE OMNIBUS RIDE.

GEORGE treated his best girl to a ride on a motor-omnibus, but on account of his limited resources it was necessary that they should walk back. Now, if the bus goes at the rate of nine miles an hour and they can walk at the rate of three miles an hour, how far can they ride so that they may be back in eight hours ?

860.—A SEQUEL TO THE ICEMAN.

A CORRESPONDENT sends me the following extension of "The Puzzle of the Iceman," No. 821—September, 1926. As before, the new missing words end in "ice."

"The iceman, much annoyed, joined himself as —— to a fierce —— of a woman, named —— ——, who lived in a sort of ——. But soon regretting his action, he, although only a mere ——, lifted up his —— and produced some —— music, which made the people —— and in a —— everybody became cheerful, and eventually he was able to —— his employer to sign an —— between all contentious parties, undoubtedly a great —— of luck."

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

852.—THE CANCELLED CHEQUE.

EVERY square number must end with 1, 4, 5, 6, or 9 or with 00 preceded by one of these figures. A square number that was multiplied by 113 could not have ended in 1, 4, 6, 9, or 00 because the number on the cheque would then have ended in 3, 2, 8, 7, or 00, and in no case could the last two figures be a square number. Therefore the original square number must have ended in a 5, and as a consequence, when multiplied by 113, must produce a number also ending in 5. Further, the only two-figure square number ending in 5 is 25, so the number on the cheque ended in 25. The square multiplied by 113 must lie between 885 and 8,845, and the only two square numbers available are 1225 and 7225. The first will not work, but 7225 multiplied by 113 gives us 816425, or 81—64—25. The correct answer.

853.—THE AMBIGUOUS CLOCK.

THE first time would be in $5\frac{5}{143}$ minutes past 12, which might also (the hands being similar) indicate 1hr. $0\frac{99}{143}$ mins.

854.—A PHONETIC EXERCISE.

MY own list of fourteen words is as follows: ALLAY (L A), CAYENNE (K N), CUPIDITY (Q P D T), DECAY (D K), EFFICACY (F E K C), EFFIGY (F E G), EMPTY (M T), ENEMY (N M E), ENVY (N V), ESSAY (S A), EXCESS (X S), IVY (I V), OBESITY (O B C T), and SEEDY (C D). One or two slight variations are possible, but I do not think they would improve the solution.

855.—SECURING THE ALMOND.

THE Provost takes a half-inch slice from the long end of the cake and then always takes from the same end as the head master, making the head master's slice up to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The Provost is then bound to secure the almond.

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Cast in an heroic mould—tried and tempered in the fires of experience—steeled against the troubles of this world by the strength of his arm and the courage in his heart.

In the building of health and vigour that does not pass with the passing of the years, Wincarnis is all-powerful. Wincarnis will put new strength into your arm, new courage into your heart, a new smile upon your lips. It will help you to retain the abounding health that is the pride of youth.

Wincarnis brings you something of the glorious summer sunshine that ripens the grapes from which Wincarnis is pressed. It brings you the extra warmth and vitality you need to resist influenza and kindred ills of winter. It is always at hand cheering, encouraging, inspiring.

presentation picture free

In the frame of this magnificent specimen of manhood in middle age, Mr. FORTUNINO MATANIA, R.I. has here contributed his ideal of perfect physical fitness. An art proof of this superb design, size 15" x 10" free of advertising matter and suitable for framing, will be sent free on receipt of 2d. (for postage) and a wrapper from a bottle of Wincarnis. Write, marking envelope *Free Picture No.* 3, to the address below.

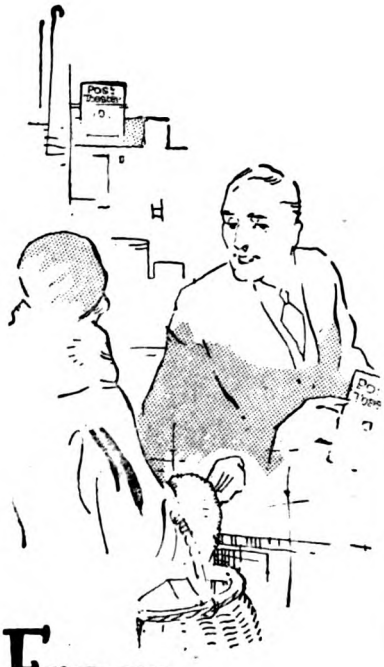
WINCARNIS

The GOOD *Tonic Wine*

From all Wine Merchants Licensed Grocers and Licensed Chemists.

Coleman & Co., Ltd., Wincarnis Works, Norwich.

For British Families—
"Mondamin" brings
Indian Corn—food o'
the stalwart!



From the Prairie *for your table!*

For *you*, Indian Corn, grown on the wide prairies, has been transformed into the most "scrumptious" breakfast food in the world—corn flakes—Post Toasties! The heart of the ripe grain is cooked and toasted 'til it becomes crisp, curled, nutty-flavoured flakes—absolutely delicious with sugar and milk—or cream. You can get a great big box for *ninepence. Just see how the family like Post Toasties for breakfast!

Post Toasties stay crisp in milk or cream; and the triple wrapping preserves their crispness and delicate nutty flavour.

(Except in Ireland)

Post Toasties

Double Crisp

INDIAN CORN FLAKES

STAY CRISP IN MILK OR CREAM

Post Toasties are one of the Post Health Products which include Grape-Nuts, Postum, and Post's Bran Flakes

YARDLEY'S
Old English
LAVENDER

THERE is no Lavender with quite the same lovable fragrance, no other with just the same irresistible appeal to women of charm and elegance who cherish it as a perfume and delight in its incomparable freshness.

When you are hot and tired and headache threatens, a little sprinkled on your handkerchief and applied to the temples and forehead will give such a wonderful sense of coolness and reinvigoration.

In the sick-room it is invaluable.

Price per Bottle from 3 -
Decanters from 21 -

Of all Chemists, Coiffeurs and Stores, and from

The Lovable Fragrance

YARDLEY: 8 New Bond Street LONDON

Even her Jeweller thought them Real

How many women wearing Ciro Pearls have been given the credit of possessing rare Orientals of great value? Ever since Ciro Pearls were first evolved in our laboratories their amazing resemblance to the real has baffled thousands. A client writes: "For five years I have worn a string of Ciro Pearls almost daily, and until this week when I divulged the secret, even my jeweller had always supposed them to be genuine.

If you cannot call at our showrooms to select Ciro Pearls exactly suited to your own individuality—the exact length and the perfect graduation; each pearl of just the right size and precisely the correct tint for YOU, send us a Guinea for a 16-inch Necklet. You may wear it for a fortnight, and if it does not give you entire satisfaction return it to us and we will refund your money in full.

Miss Nora Swinburne wearing her Ciro Pearls

Ciro Pearls

May we send you our Illustrated Booklet post free?

CIRO PEARLS LTD.
178 REGENT ST. LONDON, W. DEPT. 12
48 OLD BOND ST. W. 120 CHEAPSIDE, E.C.
MANCHESTER, LIVERPOOL, BIRMINGHAM, GLASGOW
EDINBURGH (Jenners) NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Fenwicks)
BRISTOL (Taylors, College Green) DUBLIN (Switzers)

FRY'S CARTETS

CUBE BLOCK CHOCOLATE

Ask for a Cartet!

FOUR KINDS

Fruit and Nut Chocolate
Delicious plain chocolate, with juicy raisins and crisp almonds!

Belgrave Chocolate
Perfectly plain, plainly perfect—a chocolate out of the ordinary!

Valencia Chocolate
Delightful milk chocolate made even more delightful with fruity raisins and choicest almonds!

Milk Chocolate
Made with fresh milk from English farms.

6D
EACH

Also in ½ lb. blocks:

Fruit and Nut 1/-
Belgrave Choc. 1/-
Milk Choc. 1/-
Valencia Choc. 1/2

For Baby's welfare—

The safeguarding of Baby's Health and Comfort is the aim and purpose of the Otterburn Baby Rug—and *right well* does it perform its chosen duty.

Made entirely from light and fleecy virgin wool, the "Otterburn" gives healthful warmth without undue weight, and after years of wear and repeated washing is just as snug and cosy as when new.

Baby could not have a more faithful guardian 'gainst chills and ills than the trusty "Otterburn." It makes an ideal coverlet for Cot or Pram, and as a nursing wrap is *all* a Mother could desire.

The little Tab shown above is stitched to every genuine "Otterburn." Be sure to look for the little Tab and so make certain the Rug you buy is an *all-new-wool* "Otterburn." Cheaper, imitation Rugs, made from inferior and re-used wool cannot possibly give the same protection or wear so well as the all *virgin-wool* "Otterburn."

Handy yet ample in size, the "Otterburn" measures 30 by 36 ins. and is made in Grey, Cream, Sky, Saxe, Rose, Navy and Biscuit colours. Price **13/11**

Sold by Drapers, Pram Sellers, etc.

Ask to see "Otterburn" Baby Rugs and look for the little Tab. If your Draper is unable to supply, send us his name and address, with your own, enclosing remittance for 13/11 and stating colour needed. We will then supply you, post free, and credit your shopman with the sale.

OTTERBURN MILL, LTD.,
Otterburn Bridge, Northumberland.

13/11 Otterburn Baby Rug

Made entirely from pure, new wool.

(Trade enquiries are invited from Drapers, Pram Sellers, etc.)

(50)

Wee Blankets for Baby's Crib . . . . . .

Specially for Baby's Crib you can now get dainty little Otterburn Crib Blankets, woven entirely from first grade Cheviot Wool. With an Otterburn Crib Blanket and an Otterburn Baby Rug, Baby's comfort and safety are doubly assured. Otterburn Crib Blankets are made in Cream, Pale Pink, Teddy Bear and Pale Blue, each one having a wide hem of silk in the same shade as the Blanket.

All those who sell Otterburn Baby Rugs will be able to supply Otterburn Crib Blankets. If you have any difficulty in obtaining Otterburn Crib Blankets locally, we will supply you direct, post free, provided you enclose the name and address of your usual Retailer, so that we can credit him with the sale.

Otterburn Crib Blankets measure 36 ins. by 54 ins.

PRICE 14/6

Walk the Barratt way.

When skirts trailed on the ground no one cared how a lady walked. Now the way you walk is the first thing people notice about you. The old way of modelling shoes takes little count of walking, but Barratts' new scientific modelling *concentrates on making shoes which help you to walk naturally, healthily and gracefully.*

Write To-day For This Stylish New Shoe

This new Oak-coloured leather shoe is O.K. for pleasure or business. Dressier than a sandal and even more cool and comfortable. Daintily punched front and quarter. Centre strap which gives a sporty touch. Popular low heel, solid leather sole, easy, smart toe and smooth solid leather insole modelled for walking the Barratt way. Stainless lining. The factory price by post makes marvellous value.

14'9

POST FREE Style 7879

Order Now.—State your size and Style 7879.

Made also in Lizard Pattern leather, Style 7880, same price.

Sizes: 2, 2½, 3, 3½, 4, 4½, 5, 5½, 6, 6½, 7.

If you don't know your size, send Footshape—outline of stockinged foot on paper. Exert normal pressure. Hold pencil upright. Satisfaction or money back. Enclose money order or cheque for 14/9. Postage overseas extra. Mailing weight 1 lb. 8 ozs. C.O.D. Deposit 5/-.

W. BARRATT & CO., Ld., 20, Footshape Works, Northampton

Write for Superb Catalogue of Footshape Footwear Enclose Twopence Postage

THE PRESCRIPTION YOUR PHYSICIAN WRITES

℞ *for Nasal Catarrh*

No matter how mildly or how severely you suffer from catarrh, Glyco-Thymoline will give you relief! 19,567 doctors have successfully used this safe, soothing and healing antiseptic. Follow their lead. A nasal spray of Glyco-Thymoline banishes all discomfort.

A daily spray of Glyco-Thymoline is your surest protection against germs that enter the system by the nose and throat.

At all chemists, 1/10, 3/8, 7/6.

THOS. CHRISTY & CO., 4-12 Old Swan Lane, London, E.C.4

MAKE SURE YOU GET

GLYCO-THYMOLINE

Trade Mark Regd.

NOT SOMETHING NAMED TO SOUND LIKE IT

Photo: Dorothy Wilding.

Trifles make up Perfection and Perfection is no trifle

MISS PHYLLIS DARE, one of England's most charming women, declares that the skin has two natural requirements: nourishment and cleansing. Pond's Cold Cream fulfils both these functions admirably; while Pond's Vanishing Cream prevents the delicacy of the skin from taking harm from the weather or a dusty indoor atmosphere.

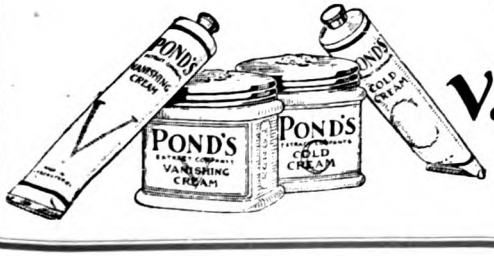
She who seems to make no effort to attract is ever the most charming. Yet modern charm is a thing of art as well as nature, and could one know the care that goes into achieving beauty, it would be revealed that every detail of appearance calls for the utmost discrimination. In regard to face creams the choice of those who know is, invariably, Pond's Two Creams.

Pond's Cold Cream is for **cleanliness**—it should be used regularly every night before retiring to rest and during the day after any long exposure in the open air. *Pond's Vanishing Cream* gives **protection;** used throughout the day, and after a daytime cleansing it saves the skin from sunburn and other blemishes, gives a lovely even finish and makes an ideal powder base.

"TO SOOTHE AND SMOOTH YOUR SKIN."

POND'S CREAMS *From all Chemists and Stores. In handsome opal jars* **1/3** *and* **2/6.** *In tubes* **7½d.** *(for handbag) and* **1/-.** *Pond's Cold Cream also in extra large jars* **5/-** *and in extra large tubes* **2/6.**

TRIAL SAMPLES Pond's Extract Co. (Dept. 22), 103, St. John Street, E.C.1, will send for **2d.** in stamps for postage and packing a sample tube of both Creams.



Pond's Vanishing & Cold Creams

WE DO NOT TALK ABOUT SUCCESS—WE GUARANTEE IT.

Guarantee.

I hereby guarantee that I will provide each Student of The Bennett College with tuition until he has passed the examination for which he has enrolled.

I further guarantee to provide all the necessary books free of charge and undertake that no further fees will be required other than those stated on the form of enrolment.

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(GOVERNOR), THE BENNETT COLLEGE, SHEFFIELD.

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We have **FREE** booklets setting out the possibilities in connection with each of the subjects shown in the lists, send for the one in which you are interested, or ask for **MY PRIVATE ADVICE,** which also is free. You incur no obligation.

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Cheaper Saddles cannot afford Brooks quality Leather.

Leather is the muscle and sinew of a saddle. Without good sound leather no cycle saddle can retain its wonderful comfort-giving shape—for comfort's sake buy a dependable

BROOKS
REGISTERED TRADE MARK
CYCLE SADDLE

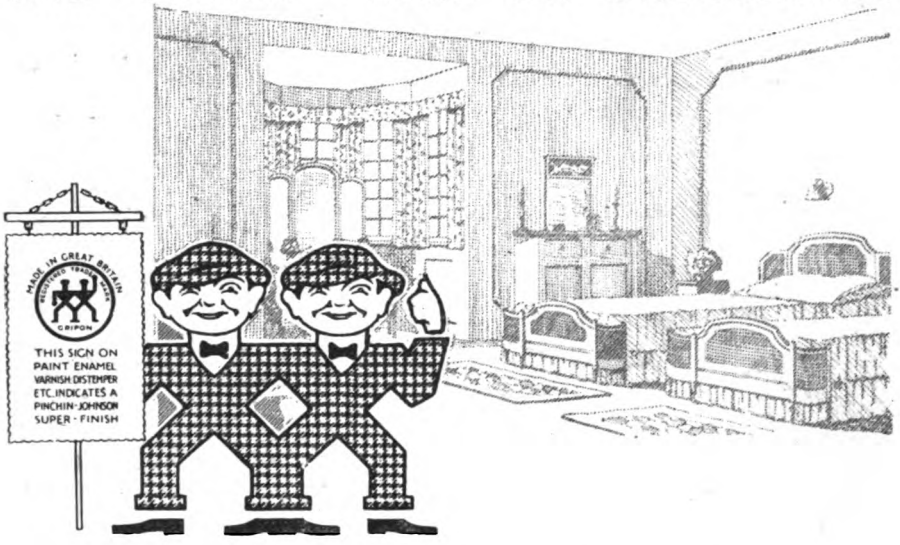
Before buying consult the Brooks Book. Post Free.

J. B. BROOKS & CO., LTD., 66, Criterion Works, Birmingham.

BROOKS B 90.—A Saddle for long distance riding. A very resilient type of seat.
Size 1 - 18/-. Size 2 - 19/6.

BROOKS B 10.—Just the model for the athletic cyclist.
Price - - - 14/-

THE GRIPON TWINS ON DECORATION



The decoration of a bedroom should be in a scheme of subdued and restful harmony with cheerful, but delicate, colouring.

PINCHIN, JOHNSON SUPER-FINISHES are without a serious rival for producing fine decoration. And they protect the surface of your property, within and without, for years. Instruct your decorator to use them and ensure a thoroughly satisfactory result.

Pinchin, Johnson Super-Finishes

GRIPON SUPER-PAINT
Satinette THE PERFECT ENAMEL
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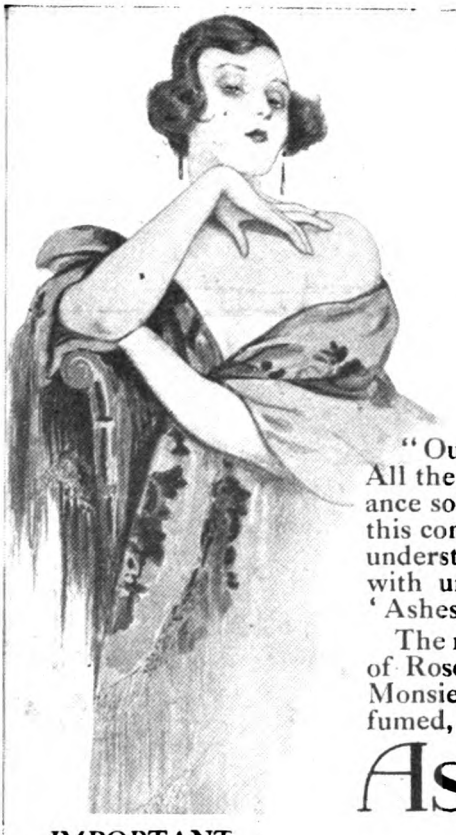
¶ A finely produced booklet, suggesting a variety of pleasing colour schemes, will be posted free on request.

PINCHIN, JOHNSON & CO., LTD.
General Buildings, Aldwych, London, W.C.2.



La Belle Complexion!

"Oui, mais to-day how it is necessary! All the ladies, they must have the appearance so chic. Mais, what is it I do to have this complexion si delicat? Ma foi, is it not understood! Help a little the good Nature with une si petite caresse of the powder 'Ashes of Roses.'"

The rare and costly ingredients of "Ashes of Roses" Face Powder are known only to Monsieur Bourjois. It is exquisitely perfumed, and so fine as to be almost invisible.

Ashes of Roses

BOURJOIS - PARIS

Face Powder

works wonders in making the complexion beautiful.

IMPORTANT.

BOURJOIS' PERFUMED CIGARETTES

made by hand of the finest Virginia Tobacco, delicately perfumed with Ashes of Roses or 'Ashes of Violets'

In boxes, 1/-, 2/-, 4/-

Obtainable everywhere

FREE. A sample Perfumed Cigarette is included with this week's Coupon Set. Fill it in now.

The Bourjois Toilet Preparations in Ashes of Roses or Ashes of Violets.

Perfume	5/-, 7/6, 10/6, 15/-, 27/6	Depilatory	3/6
Face Powder	1/9 & 3/-	Bath Crystals	2/6 & 4/6
Vanishing Cream... ...	1/3 & 2/6	Poudre de Toilette	5/6
Compact Powder ...	1/- & 1/9	Baby Powder	1/-
Talcum Powder ...	1/- & 2/6	Lip Stick	1/6

Vanity Bag Compact Powder in Gilt Case, with dainty Puff & Mirror, 2/- & 3/9

Sold by all Chemists, Perfumers, Coiffeurs and Stores.

Ashes of Roses "Face Powder & Cream" Coupon.

6D. Please send the Ashes of Roses or Ashes of Violets* Introductory Set containing Face Powder and Vanishing Cream, and also an Ashes of Roses Perfumed Cigarette. I enclose 6d. *Strike out one not required.

Name.....

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Not available for Foreign or Colonial Readers, or for the C.O.D. Postal Service.

A. BOURJOIS ET CIE., LTD. (Dept. S.M.9.6d.), 4, WATER LANE, LONDON, E.C.4

Do your Nerves stay up when you go to bed?

"Ovaltine" is the "Good-Night" beverage of many thousands of people in every walk of life throughout the world. Our testimonial files are filled with letters from grateful users and every post adds to the number.

When all other means have failed "Ovaltine" has ensured a night of sound, refreshing, natural sleep. It is "Tired Nature's Sweet Restorer." That is the common experience.

"Ovaltine" soothes, feeds and invigorates the system in an unequalled way. It contains neither chemicals nor drugs. It is an extraction of Nature's best restorative foods—Malt, Milk and Eggs—highly concentrated, delicious in flavour, and rendered easily digestible by an original and exclusive process.

Make "Ovaltine" your "Good-Night" beverage *every night*. It is acknowledged to be supreme for wooing sleep naturally and creating new energies and strong healthy nerves. "Ovaltine" benefits every member of the home.

OVALTINE

TONIC FOOD BEVERAGE

Builds-up Brain, Nerve and Body

Sold in tins at 1/6, 2/6 and 4/6.

The larger tins are more economical to purchase.

P.422.

Write NOW BEST SHOE VALUE

Greenlees & Sons' "Easiephit" Footwear leads in value, smartness and up-to-date qualities. The unique Footwear Bargains obtainable from the "Easiephit" Factories are evidenced by No. 452, GENT'S TAN WILLOW OXFORD (as illustrated). This is a really handsome SHOE for smart town wear; with Plain Stitched Cap, Medium Toe; made as Hand Sewn. In Half Sizes, 5—11. Britain's best value at **16/9.** Such splendid Fitting Shoes, made with careful attention to every detail by makers of such long and large experience, must fully satisfy you. Also in Patent, No. 249, at **17/9.** Money returned if not satisfied. ORDER NOW.

LOOK SMART AND WALK IN COMFORT.

THE FAMOUS NAME OF FAMOUS FOOTWEAR

16/9

Foreign Postage extra

"Easiephit"

WEAR "EASIEPHITS" AND HAVE COMFORT

The unusual values offered are only made possible by selling DIRECT to the public through our 260 shops or by post through the medium of our magnificent catalogue now offered FREE TO YOU.

BARGAIN CATALOGUE FREE

Write for a copy to-day.

It pictures with true-to-life illustrations, footwear of every style and price, for every purpose and class, and made by Leicester's leading manufacturers, Messrs. Greenlees & Sons, Ltd. It is a guide to economical buying, invaluable to all who desire to keep supplied with first-class, up-to-date British Goods.

GREENLEES & SONS

("Easiephit" Footwear), LTD.

(Dept. S), EAST PARK ROAD, LEICESTER

—a few stitches and they're on!

CASH'S NAMES are the only sure means of marking all linen, personal and household, to prevent loss in the Laundry and elsewhere. They are so easily attached; just a few stitches and they're on.

CASH'S NAMES

Woven on fine cambric tape in the following fast colours: Red, Black, Green, Gold, Helio, Sky & Navy Blue Lettering.

12 dozen (144 names) **5/-** 6 dozen (72 names) **3/9** 3 dozen (36 names) **2/9**

Obtainable from all Drapers and Outfitters at short notice

Send a postcard to-day for FREE Sample and list of Styles

J. & J. CASH, Ltd. (Dept. A.4), Coventry.

Australia: J. & J. CASH Pty. Ltd., Cubitt St., Richmond, Melbourne.

Write for patterns of Cash's Wash Ribbons.

HURCULACES

No. 40 FOR 4d (per pair)

Lucky for Boots

The Lace with the Extra Long Wear.

No. 40 for 4d. per pair, is a lace of Silk Finish, extra strength, made in all styles for Ladies' and Men's Boots and Shoes, ordinary or invisible eyelets.

OTHER QUALITIES:

No. 30 for 3d. per pair, Extra Super Glace Yarn.
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YOU NEED HURCULACES IN YOUR BOOTS AND SHOES.

If any difficulty in obtaining Hurculaces send direct to us for a pair and we will give you the name of nearest Retailer who supplies Hurculaces

Manufactured by:

FAIRE BROS. & Co. Ltd., LEICESTER

Eyes shining — Blood racing — that's Health. Then it's GOOD to be alive.

Glorious Health

When your car stops, the first thing to do is to see whether you have petrol. The same with your body. Your blood must feed every nerve and cell. If it is too diluted, what else can you expect but fatigue, "nerviness" and a sort of let-me-sit-here-feeling? Feed your blood. You can do that with Sanatogen, for Sanatogen infuses into the very cells of the blood exactly those elements—phosphorus and albumin—that build up keen energy and buoyant health.

Why not try Sanatogen for a short time? There is no uncertainty about the results. Sanatogen has been tried out conclusively by thousands of physicians, and scores of leading sportsmen take it regularly.

That should make you give it at least, a fair trial.

SANATOGEN

The True Tonic-Food.

Genatosan Ltd. Loughboro'

At all Chemists from 2/3 per tin.

Summer Delight

CLARNICO LILY ASSORTMENT

The "Plain" consists of several favourite Caramels and Caramel-Chocolates. The "Chocolate" assortment contains a rather larger variety—*all* covered with a very fine chocolate.

ALL CLARNICO CONFECTIONERY IS GOOD CONFECTIONERY

CLARKE, NICKOLLS & COOMBS, Ltd.
Victoria Park, London.

Chivers' Jellies

Flavoured with Ripe Fruit Juices

Chivers & Sons, Ltd., *Orchard Factory*, Histon, Cambridge.

Get the OXO Habit

OXO

enriches soups, stews & savouries

Mother says it's all we need

AND she's right, too—the bubbling good spirits of her happy little family are proof to her day after day of the nourishment abounding in Kellogg's Corn Flakes.

She's delighted, too, because the golden-brown crispy flakes need no cooking—just cold milk or cream or fruits added to make an appetising dish of tempting flavour. She saves gas, saves time, saves washing of pots and pans every morning.

Grown-ups find a better balanced food in Kellogg's than in eggs and bacon. So light, so easy to digest, this energy-building cereal brings back sparkling eyes and radiant good health in quick time. That "heavy feeling" after meals is unknown to the user of Kellogg's Corn Flakes.

If you would feel fit and keep fit start with Kellogg's tomorrow morning!

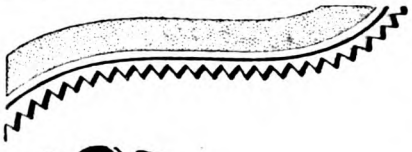
Insist on Kellogg's—the original Corn Flakes. Made by Kellogg in London, Canada. Packed for your protection in the Red and Green inner-sealed wax-wrapped packet.

Sold by all grocers

Kellogg's CORN FLAKES

KELLOGG COMPANY *of* GREAT BRITAIN, *Ltd.*
329, High Holborn, London, W. C. 1

Also makers of Kellogg's ALL-BRAN *—a laxative food.*



SORE THROAT

Quickly and Pleasantly Removed

If your throat has become sore and inflamed through smoking or voice strain, if it feels dry and difficult to swallow—take an "Allenburys" Glycerine and Black Currant Pastille.

Slip one in your mouth—now—or any time—Delicious! isn't it?

The soothing effect of fresh black currant juice and glycerine quickly relieves the most irritated throat.

Your Chemist stocks them.

Packed in distinctive tin boxes containing:

2 oz. - - 8d.
4 oz. - - 1/3
8 oz. - - 2/3
1 lb. - - 4/3

Allenburys
Glycerine & Black Currant PASTILLES

ALLEN & HANBURYS LTD.,
37 Lombard Street, London, E.C. 3

50 MILLION LEMONS

are used annually from the Sunny Island of Sicily for making this delicious thirst quencher. Lemonade from Luscious Lemons thats—

EIFFEL TOWER LEMONADE

The "DOREEN" from 55/6

WOOD BROS.
MATERNITY WEAR.

(As supplied to Royalty and Society.)

TAILORED TO MEASURE.—48-HOUR SERVICE. The Best Value at the Lowest Price. You cannot buy Maternity Garments that are better made, or more reasonable in price, than those from Wood Bros.; they are wonderful value, stylish, up-to-date, and show an immense saving. The famous self-adjusting MAITURNUS Band (Regd.) is used by Wood Bros. for all their garments. It is the most successful way of maintaining a normal appearance. Write for Catalogue of designs to Manageress. Skirts from **14/11**, Coat Frocks from **52/6**, Costumes from **63/-**, Accouchement Sets from **14/11**, Maternity Belts, **12/6**, Complete Layettes from **35/-**, Maternity Corsets from **8/11**. **Wood Bros. also supply everything for Baby from Birth.** Special Catalogue on request. **Full satisfaction or money refunded.**

WOOD BROS. Ltd. (Maternity Wear Specialists), 14. St. Mary's Street, Manchester.
(The original Inventors of Maternity Wear.)

HINDES HAIR TINT

for Grey or Faded Hair

Tints Grey or Faded Hair any natural shade desired —Brown, Dark-Brown, Light-Brown or Black.

FOR Grey or Faded Hair—those emblems (often premature) of departing youth—the combing through of Hindes Hair Tint is the safe, certain, always satisfactory treatment.

The highest medical opinion attests the harmlessness of Hindes Hair Tint. Over a million women users prove its perfect reliability.

Of all Chemists, Stores and Hairdressers, **2/6**, *or direct.—*

HINDES, LTD., 60, Parker Street, Kingsway, London.

Style C308 . . . **8/11**

Wrap-round Girdle for medium to full figures: Fancy Broché. Elastic Panel at each side. Sizes 22 to 30 ins. Self-White or Pink on White Ground.

Corsetry for 1927

All the "S & S" Models are scientifically made to give comfortable support. They are *very* stylish and demonstrate, beyond all doubt, that fashionable corsets need *not* be expensive.

S&S

Corsets

Ask for "S & S" and look for the label. Every Ladies' Outfitter either stocks or can get "S & S" for you. Write to address below for Booklet No. S 48, which illustrates many styles from our 1927 range.

Every "S & S" Model is guaranteed unconditionally

STAPLEY & SMITH, Ltd.,
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(S 2)

'Mylesta' Lingerie, as well as Gowns, Frocks, Children's Wear, etc., and Fabrics in the piece, is now obtainable from most good drapers in a full range of designs and in the new season's colours.

THOSE who wear 'Mylesta' Lingerie know the full satisfaction — that delicious thrill—of being well dressed beneath. These tastefully designed garments, silk-like in their beauty, and silken in lustre, make an unfailing appeal to women who love beautiful things yet seek to avoid extravagance. 'Mylesta' Lingerie is modestly priced and, because it wears and washes well, truly inexpensive.

'Mylesta' underwear is obtainable in 'Mylesta' Tricot, 'Mylesta' Milanese (Ladderproof), 'Mylesta' Atlas Stripe (Ladderproof), 'Mylesta' Fastnit (Ladderproof), etc., etc. All genuine 'Mylesta' garments bear this woven tab.

'MYLESTA' TRADE MARK MADE IN ENGLAND

The leading Drapers are now displaying this New Lingerie

To the Trade. Ask your usual Wholesaler for 'Mylesta' Lingerie. 101

'MYLESTA' TRADE MARK
UNDERWEAR

The new Crochet Crepe Paper Hats

You can easily make them in all the latest styles from DENNISON CREPE. Remarkably durable, very becoming, cool and comfortable, ideal for sports or business wear, showerproof, and surprisingly simple and inexpensive to make. Write for FREE Folder containing full directions, with instructions for making two of the chic styles now so much in vogue.

Ask your Stationer for

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Please fill in this Coupon—

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Please send me FREE copy of your Crochet Hatmaking Folder.

Name .....

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(Use Block Letters.)

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Buy direct from the Staffordshire Potteries and Save Money.

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Breakfast Set, 29 piece **28/10**
Dinner Set - 54 " **86/5**
Carriage Paid in Gt. Britain.

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Send for 2 sample plates. 1/6, post free.

The Windsor Porcelain Co. (Dept. S), Norfolk St. Works, Hanley, Staffs.

Join this happy family

on the road to Radiant Health

You wouldn't recognise this merry party as the Robinson's. Two years ago they were the heaviest, dullest crowd alive.

Look at them now! . . . . It appears that Robinson read an article by an eminent Medico which proved clearly the dependence of good health upon good teeth.

Now that explained a lot. . . . . The Robinson's visited the Dentist *en masse.* Then Robinson made a strict household rule—thrice-daily tooth-cleaning with Gibbs Dentifrice.

This was great fun for the kiddies, because Gibbs has a lovely taste and refreshing effect. And just as the Dentist said—the fragrant antiseptic foam from Gibbs Dentifrice seethes into tiny crevices of the teeth; kills germs; removes impurities; polishes the teeth to pearly lustre; and makes the gums firm and rosy. Bring health and happiness into your family circle through Gibbs Dentifrice.

Your teeth are Ivory Castles—defend them with

Gibbs Dentifrice

BRITISH MADE

In neat aluminium cases: Large size, 1/-; De Luxe, 1/6; Refills, 11d.; Popular size, 7½d. Tubes, 6d. and 1/-.

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Ask your Chemist for FREE entry form for GIBBS HAPPY SNAP COMPETITION

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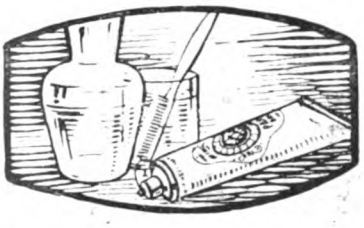

Wake up with a healthy mouth

BEGIN the day well! Prepare for it overnight: give the teeth a thorough brushing — up-and-down as well as to-and-fro. Brush out every particle of food that can lurk between the teeth, and at the same time kill any germs that may cling to them, for germs secrete the acids that mean decay for the teeth. Thirty seconds' exposure to Euthymol Tooth Paste will do their business and leave the mouth deliciously healthy and clean-tasting Never go to bed without using your

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By its method of individual cutting the "Grove-nor" Cut has raised post-order tailoring to so fine an art that perfect fit and style are guaranteed from your own personal measurements. All the cloths and trimmings are the best obtainable, and by purchasing direct from the heart of England's cloth centre you save 30% to 50%.

Write for full range of cloth patterns for temperate and tropical climates and 76-page styles book and outfitting catalogue.

Send to-day for the style book and patterns, which explains fully how the "Grove-nor" Cut method is error-proof and how the generous guarantee ensures your complete satisfaction without the risk of a penny.

Starting prices for Suits, **84/-.** Highest price **7 Gns.** Overcoats of pure wool Tweed start at **79/-.** Cloth can also be supplied by the yard from **10/6.** Any length cut.

Address your postcard request to-day to

GROVES & LINDLEY,
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Wonderful value in

IRISH LINEN

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IRISH LINEN SHEETS.

S.M. 627. Extraordinary value in Bleached Irish Linen Sheets. Plain hemmed.

Size (single bed) 2 x 3 yds. Per Pair	Size (double bed) 2½ x 3 yds. Per Pair
34/-	**43/6**

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Each **3/2**

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AS manufacturers of the best House linen, we invite you to compare our prices, and find the all-round savings by direct dealing.

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Size 15 x 22 ins. Six for **8/6**

Write for free samples and copy of new illustrated Catalogue No. 36 L, sent post free.

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OUR NEW OFFER

The famous "Florence" pattern in Swansea Light Blue TEA & DINNER SERVICES for 6 persons. Consisting of:

Tea Service.	*Dinner Service.*
6 Tea Cups	6 Dinner Plates
6 Tea Saucers	6 Pudding Plates
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1 Slop Basin	2 Vegetable Dishes and Covers
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The Tea Set finished in best English Gold.

The Lot **45/-** Packed Free. Carr. Paid. Safe Delivery Guaranteed.

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WORLD FAMOUS Curtain Fabrics.

Resist Tropical Sun, Sea Air, and Washing.

ALL Fabrics prefixed with the word "SUN" will be replaced should the colour fade within three years. Patterns on approval.
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Shoes fitted the Saxone way help feet to keep healthy. No prison for five toes, no torture-chamber for tenderness. Every part of the foot in the place intended for it—freedom here, support there, an adjustment of width, length and slenderness. The service is yours by post.

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80 pages fully illustrated with all styles for the family.

So soft, so pliant, so alive to the smallest movement of your foot are these Brown Glacé Kid Shoes that you forget you have shoes on your feet. Glacé kid of a satiny surface, coloured Nut Brown, red stitching on the trim welts, and the sole, welted as handsewn, a piece of English leather of sufficient thickness to withstand wear - the shoes are ideal for hot weather.

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"NELL GWYNN" Antique Candles

are stately and elegant in shape; they add a finishing touch to any decorative scheme, and a note of colour to any home. They burn perfectly.

In 36 Art Colours

	2 in box	4 in box
12 in.	1/6	2/9
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In 6 Colours only

24 in.	3/-	5/9
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"Lights of Other Days" will be sent free on request.

If unobtainable locally send remittance and we execute post free.

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6d for 4d

Your retailer is authorised to give you a 6d tablet for 4d and a 1/6 box, containing 3 tablets, for a 1/-. Our Nell Toilet Soap combines the properties of a fragrant perfume and complexion cream in one.

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A Customer writes:
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'The coat I had from you 2 years ago has been wonderful. In tropical rain I always feel safe in my "Scutum."'

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TO participate in the active life of his fellow-men must ever be the invalid's most cherished wish. His hopes can be realised and his relief assured by the aid of a Carter Chair designed expressly for his comfort . . . chairs that have made life easier for thousands of invalids throughout the world for over Eighty Years.

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Write for Catalogue 98, describing this and a wide variety of hand-tricycles.

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Double the value of your smile

This New Way gives "Off-Colour" Teeth dazzling whiteness quickly and gums a healthy coral tint to contrast them

DON'T PERMIT off-colour teeth to mar your smile. Study attractive people, men or women. Note the tremendous part gleaming, clear teeth play.

And don't believe *your teeth are naturally dull or colourless.* In a few days you can work a transformation in your mouth.

Restoring dull, off-colour teeth to polished whiteness is a recent dental achievement.

It's been found that dingy teeth come simply from a film that forms on teeth. A stubborn film old-type dentifrices did not successfully clear off. That's why brushing fails you.

Run your tongue across your teeth and you can feel that film now—a sort of slippery coating. Beneath it are the dazzling white teeth you envy.

It keeps your smile unattractive because it absorbs discolorations from food, smoking, etc. It invites tooth and gum troubles.

Now, in a new-type dentifrice called Pepsodent, a scientific combatant has been found. Leading dentists widely urge it. All chemists have it. Works wonders on dingy teeth. 10-day test sent free.

Pepsodent
REGD. TRADE MARK

The New-Day Quality Dentifrice

Endorsed by World's Dental Authorities

FREE Mail this for 10 Day Tube to 1919

THE PEPSODENT COMPANY.
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Name .....

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Give full address. Write plainly. STRAND MAG.
Only one tube to a family. June, 1927.

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SUITS OF EXCELLENCE
50/- 63/- 75/- & UP.
Cut and bespoke-tailored to your own measures.

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THE KING TAILORS
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LET R. H. Child quote you *his* price for that wearing apparel—his cash offer will surprise you. Advise him by letter when sending your parcel, or write him in the first instance if you wish.

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A user of a Myatt Patent Daymarked Safety Razor Blade had no less than 30 good shaves with it—and that is not a record. Daymarking, the device that enables you to rest each edge in turn, makes Myatt British Blades unique. They keep keen. **Try Myatt Blades—made in England.**
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What a miserable fellow he is! Spoiling your pleasure and making himself a general nuisance. Get rid of him at once. Take a couple of Genasprin tablets, they will send him packing in double quick time.

Genasprin is absolutely *pure* and *safe*. It is used and prescribed by doctors as the *ideal pain-reliever* in cases of Headache, Neuralgia and all other distressing Nerve Pains. Genasprin is also very effective in banishing the many pains which are peculiar to women.

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Free Book Which Shows You How to Develop the Qualities Which Win Life's Victories.

"Since taking this Course, I can rely on myself. I can concentrate my mind on anything I wish to, and can remember things a lot better."

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For such people the remedy is Pelmanism, which trains the mind scientifically, develops its powers, and enables men and women to become Efficient, Self-Reliant and Courageous.

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Pelmanism is a simple system of Practical Psychology which has brought untold blessings to thousands of men and women. It banishes the defects and failings which "keep you down" and develops just those qualities and faculties which will enable you to succeed. The revised Course is now ready and is fully described in "The Efficient Mind." This book also shows you how you can enrol for a Course of Pelmanism on the most convenient terms. You can get a copy of this book to-day, gratis and post free, either by calling at the Institute for it or by writing for it to-day to the Pelman Institute, 104, Pelman House, Bloomsbury Street, London, W.C.1. Call or write for your free copy of this book to-day.

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102,492 children admitted.

18,000 children and young people dealt with last year.

7,747 being supported.

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918 are under industrial training.

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No red tape; No votes required.

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7,747 boys and girls and babies are now being supported—the largest family in the world.

WILL YOU SEND THEM

HALF-A-CROWN
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Four Half-Crowns will feed ten needy little ones for a day.

"Will you help other little boys like me?"

Cheques and Orders payable "Dr. Barnardo's Homes Food Fund" and crossed, may be sent to DR. BARNARDO'S HOMES, 183, BARNARDO HOUSE, STEPNEY CAUSEWAY, E.1.

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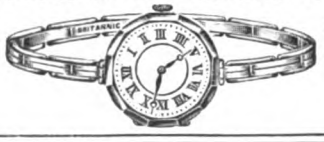

See that the name "Britannic" is engraved inside the band.

THE "Britannic" Expanding Bracelet has made an unrivalled world-wide reputation for its durability and the charm of its various designs. These bands are fully guaranteed for five years, and the springs will be renewed free of charge, any time during that period, through any jeweller.

The "Britannic" may be seen at all good-class jewellers complete with watches in various styles from **4 Guineas.** Also "Britannic" Expanding Bands alone with hooks, to replace straps.

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"SILTEX" ELASTIC HOSIERY

Seamless, Reversible, Soft and Cool.

Almost imperceptible under any Ordinary Silk Stocking.

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The AID the SIZE of a BUTTON

Commended by all leading MEDICAL JOURNALS

Gives perfect true-to-tone HEARING from all angles, for the hard-of-hearing or very deaf (headnoises). Simple and quite inconspicuous for men and women in day or evening wear. **ENTIRELY DIFFERENT from all else.** Used and recommended by Lord Leverhulme, Col. Sir Henry Knollys, K.C.V.O., Prof. J. A. Fleming, F.R.S., General Booth, and thousands of wage earners of all ages and both sexes. **FREE HOME TESTS ARRANGED. NO CONSULTATION FEE.**

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For many years we have been telling you that no Truss will ever help you. We have told you that the only truly comfortable and scientific device for holding rupture is the Brooks Rupture Appliance, and that It Is

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IF you have tried almost everything else come to us. Where others fail is where we have our greatest success. Send the attached coupon to-day and we will send you free our illustrated book on Rupture and its cure, showing our Appliance, and giving you prices and names of many people who have tried it and were cured. It is instant relief when all others fail. Remember, we use no salves, no harness, no lies.

We send it on trial to prove that what we say is true. You are the judge, and once having seen our illustrated book and read it, you will be as enthusiastic as our hundreds of patients whose letters you can also read. Fill in the free coupon below and post it to-day. It is well worth your time, whether you try our Appliance or not.

Remember

We send the Appliance on trial to prove that what we say is true. You are to be the judge. Fill in the free coupon below and post to-day.

If in London, call at our consulting-rooms. Experienced and capable fitters for ladies and gentlemen.

From a photograph of Mr. C. E. Brooks, inventor of the Appliance, who cured himself, and whose experience has since benefited thousands. If ruptured, write to-day.

"Cured—I am more than thankful."

Vine Cottage, Sawston,
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It is the first time in my life that I have ever given anyone a testimonial. The Appliance does all that you claim for it.

Since I purchased one I am more than thankful I did it. It has been a blessing to me, for my hernia has all disappeared, and I can do my work with pleasure, and do not feel any ill effects from coughing. In fact, I could dispense with the Appliance altogether but for the fact it is so light and comfortable to wear.

I can recommend it to anyone who is afflicted. You are at liberty to use this letter as you please.—Yours faithfully, F. WEBB.

Ten Reasons Why

You Should Send for the Brooks Rupture Appliance.

1. It is absolutely the only Appliance of the kind on the market to-day, and in it are embodied the principles that inventors have sought after for years.

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3. Being an air cushion of soft rubber, it clings closely to the body, yet never blisters or causes irritation.

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8. There are no metal springs in the Appliance to torture one by cutting and bruising the flesh.

9. All the material of which the Appliances are made is of the very best that money can buy, making it a durable and safe Appliance to wear.

10. Our reputation for honesty and fair dealing is so thoroughly established by an experience of over thirty years of dealing with the public, and our prices are so reasonable, our terms so fair, that there certainly should be no hesitancy in sending the free coupon to-day.

Free Information Coupon.

Brooks Appliance Co., Ltd.

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Please send me by post, in plain wrapper, your Illustrated Book and full information about your Appliance for the cure of rupture.

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ENGAGEMENT RING

WE HAVE the choicest selection of rings in London. Finest Quality Diamonds in 18ct Gold & Platinum Mounts They are sold for Cash only, at prices which defy competition Select one of the **10,000** Rings we hold in stock, and put the cash saved towards the home

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Lawn Mowers & Rollers

Since 1835, Green's have been the pioneers of all that is best in Lawn Mowers, Rollers, etc.

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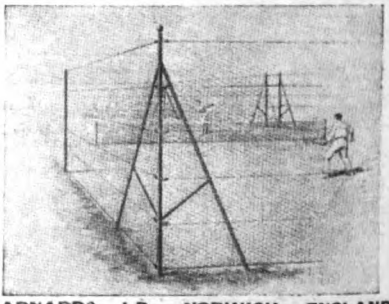

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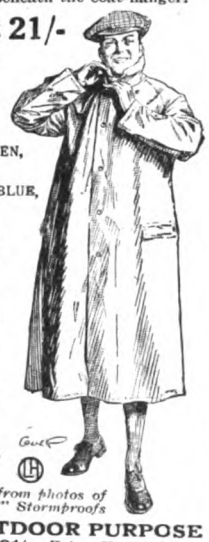

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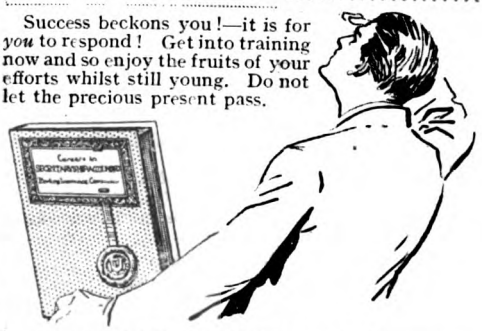

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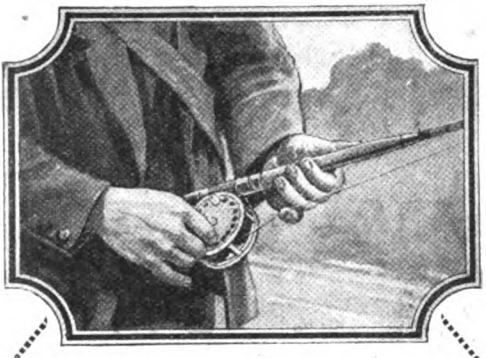

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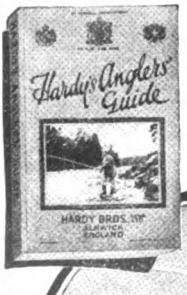

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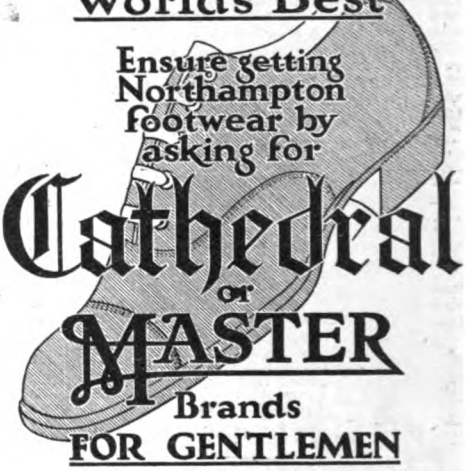

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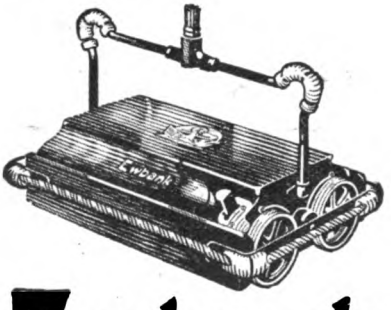

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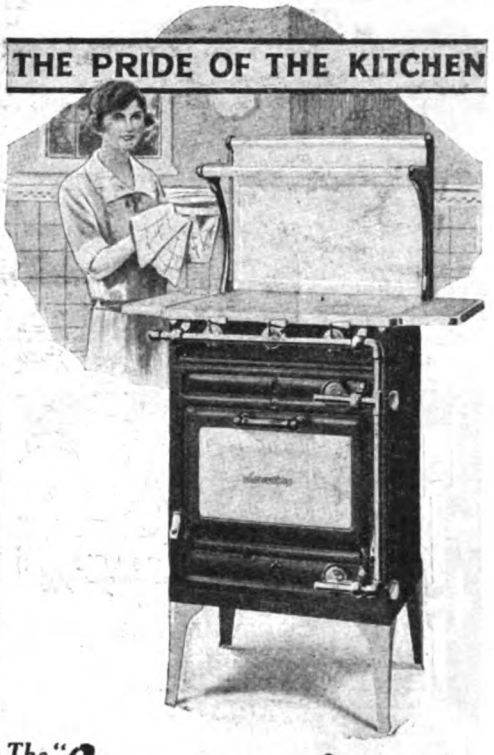

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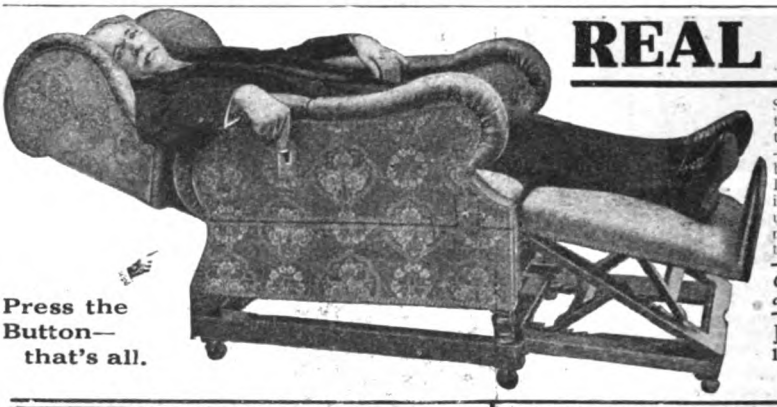

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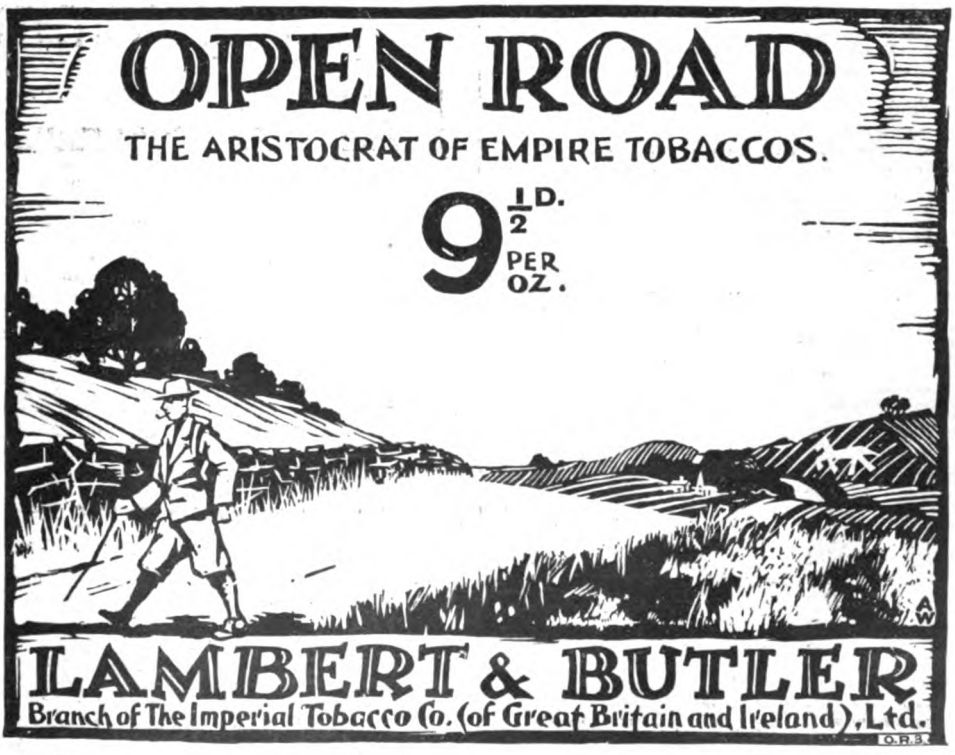

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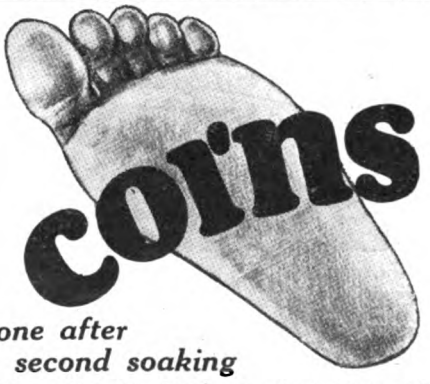

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1/6 *Half Pound Pink Packet.*

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HOW TO RECOGNISE THE SYMPTOMS AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT.

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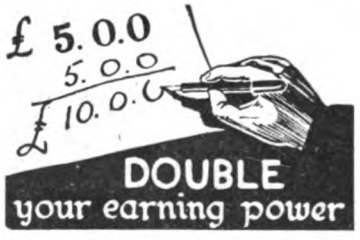

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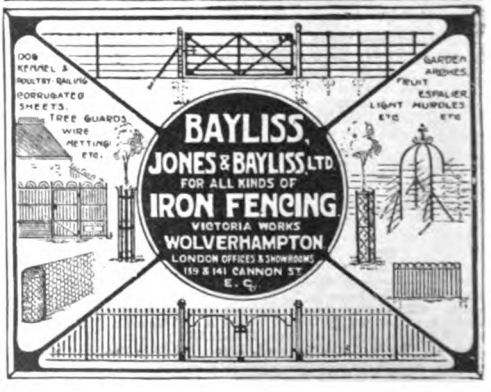

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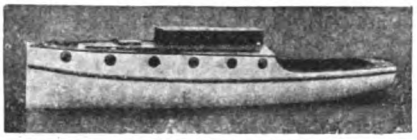

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THE DECEIVER

Though there is all the difference in the world between what we do occasionally and what we do regularly, it is extraordinary how soon an occasional indulgence can become a chronic habit. A "celebration" leads to a morning headache; the cure for that is supposed for some unknown reason to be "a hair of the dog that bit you"; hairs do not, as a rule, grow singly, and, before the celebrationist knows where he is, he has acquired an entirely new "head," which will, of course, the next day have to undergo a strenuous treatment. A vicious circle. One of the chief dangers of alcohol is its restorative—falsely restorative—qualities. You are not up to the mark, it pulls you together; you are depressed, it removes your depression and gives

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You come in dead tired from a day's hunting—if ever a man has earned a drink you feel you have—you have it and enjoy it, but it is the third one that sends the blood tingling through your veins and puts you into the mood of "seeing the night out."

Alcohol is a restorative and an incitement; and the two things work in together diabolically. Let us suppose a man who for some perfectly innocent reason does not feel up to the mark. He employs alcohol as a restorative. He feels better, ever so much better; one more drink, and he will feel as he imagines he felt (though, of course, he did not: and a good thing, too) twelve years ago, when he was at the top of his form and rowed in his college boat. He says to himself, "I have had so many drinks, and I feel a new man." And he is right. He is a new man. He has a new, exotic, and

ENTIRELY FALSE SENSE OF VALUES;

things which he rightly discarded years before as being unworthy of anyone with a sense of personal dignity become irresistibly attractive; the discipline, to which he has subconsciously subjected himself for years, is forgotten in an hour. How easy this is to slip into; how difficult to cure. You can always rely on alcohol to make a new—and a worse—man of you. But there is a cure for those wise enough to see the way they are going.

THE TURVEY TREATMENT

enables anyone unfortunate enough to have succumbed to the temptation to use alcohol after the manner we have described to give it up, literally, at a moment's notice; for it obviates entirely the depression and feeling of collapse induced by sudden abstention. In a very short time, well-being becomes a normal state, and not one at which we arrive by means which we know in our heart of hearts to be bringing ruin and destruction in their wake.

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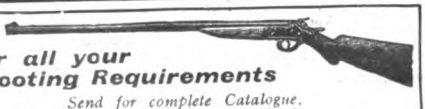

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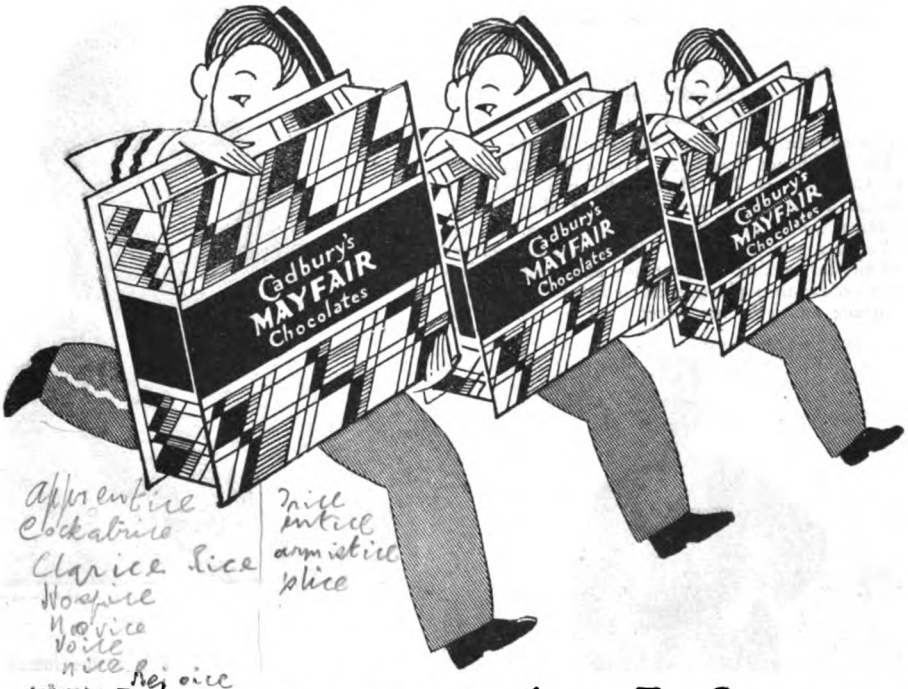

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About Motoring Matters

THE ENCOURAGING DEVELOPMENT OF THE INEXPENSIVE SALOON

By GORDON MURRAY.

The attractive 11 h.p. Clyno Saloon.

THE most significant feature of recent motoring progress is undoubtedly the rise and development of the inexpensive saloon car and its rapid growth in public favour.

On the surface this may appear, perhaps, just the normal and to-be-expected result of evolution in motor manufacture and practice, but on looking deeper you find that it indicates, first, an almost revolutionary advance in the methods of motor-car production—a co-operation between chassis designer and body-builder which was inconceivable a very few years ago: these were always the great irreconcilables—and, second, a complete if unconscious reversal of the whole public attitude towards motor-cars and motoring generally.

The Reason Why.

There is no doubt at all that the fullest satisfaction and keenest joy in motoring are to be savoured in the open car, and while the average busy and moderately-prosperous man looked upon his motor-car as a recreation, the touring car was undoubtedly the ideal—it completely filled his bill.

Substitute convenience for pleasure, however, as the main objective in ownership, and the open car takes on quite another aspect. On a car which is going to be used for a hundred different purposes—irrespective of weather conditions, and as much when its driver is *not* in holiday mood as when he is—a greater and more constant degree of protection and comfort is very desirable, even if it means sacrificing some of the sense of adventure and thrill; and the growing general preference for the saloon model is the sign of this same average man's now complete acceptance of the motor-car as an integral and almost necessary part of his ordinary daily life—a life which consists, it is as well to remember, of about three-parts work to one of play.

I am not quite sure whether the inexpensive saloon was brought into being by the gathering demand which this change of attitude implies, or the change of attitude effected by the appearance of the inexpensive saloon; and, indeed, it hardly matters. What matters is that both are now well-accomplished facts, and are between them giving a new significance to motoring in a country whose uncertain climate has, after all, always been a most convincing argument in favour of the closed-in car.

Progress.

Looking back only the fewest number of years, it is astonishing to note the rapidity of the recent developments—the speed with which difficulties have been surmounted and improvements in production made.

The early saloon bodies which were fitted to fairly low-powered cars were not only inconveniently expensive but were nearly all far too heavy for the amount of power at the car's disposal; and the increased weight markedly reduced the acceleration powers and general life of the engine, and added considerably to the cost of upkeep. The accommodation they afforded was in most cases cramped, and the seating and entrance and exit arrangements extremely inconvenient.

To-day saloon bodies for these same cars have been so lightened that they affect the performance and running costs of the car very little indeed, and its "life" prospects not at all, and their design has been so enormously improved that even the cheapest are comfortable to the point of luxury, and are as roomy and as convenient in their mode of ingress and egress as the corresponding touring models. Most important of all, they are priced at so very little more than these same open tourers that considerations of expenditure hardly enter into the question of choice.

(Continued on page 54.)

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The fact of the matter is that anyone who can afford a car of any kind now can afford a saloon—if he wants one.

A Wide Choice.

The range of choice is wide and catholic. Every type from the 7 h.p. baby car upwards now has its appropriate saloon, but they mostly fall into one of three main classes—the popular economy saloons of less than 12 h.p. costing round about £200, some less; the rather more luxurious and expensive family saloons of 12–14 h.p. and thereabouts; and the amazingly big and cheap, but not always frightfully economical, higher-powered "coaches," mainly of American origin. Each class has its own particular merits, and serves the particular needs of a clearly-defined public.

The first class is one of the world's wonders. It contains the almost unbelievable little Austin saloon (in one of its editions—not the standard one—probably the only truly silent saloon in the whole inexpensive range), but easily its most typical examples are the 11 h.p. Clyno and Morris-Cowley saloons. It is difficult to credit the fact that these handsome, roomy, extremely comfortable vehicles, equipped with a generosity which borders on the lavish, cost less than £200 to buy. But that is the truth, and their running costs are just about as low as running costs can be.

An interesting example, also in this class, of a saloon of a very different type is found in the 9–15 h.p. Renault range. With an exceptionally well-designed and well-sprung fabric body (a type which is very popular on the Continent but has not yet been adopted by many manufacturers here) it combines the most deep-seated interior luxury. The whole makes a *de luxe* closed car of unusually high-grade appearance. It easily accommodates four adult people, and with this load aboard is fit, in spite of its modest rating, to cope with anything the road presents. The price is £225.

The great advantage of the fabric type of body over the more usual steel-and-wood or all-steel coachwork is that risk of "drumming"—the bogey of the designers and manufacturers of all inexpensive saloons—is obviated; and although the little Renault's excellent engine is by no means of the quiet-running order, noise and vibration are singularly unnoticeable inside this saloon.

The "Family" Class.

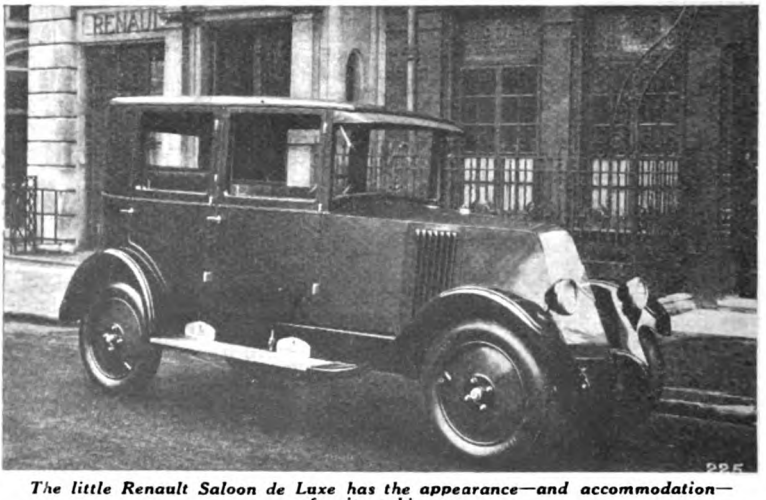
The second class—a large one—is admirably typified by the 14 h.p. Hillman saloon at £345. This car adds extra accommodation, actual luxury, extra pulling power and speed, and a really delightful refinement of performance and control to the fine working qualities featured by the saloons in the previous class. Economy of running is still a feature, although petrol consumption is naturally higher than in the lower-powered class; and there is a certain well-bred and satisfying solidity about it, an unmistakable air of confidence in the durability of its finer qualities and its all-round ability to last. Driving it even over long distances is the most effortless business, for at normal good speeds—certainly up to forty-five miles an hour—the engine is working all the time well below the limit of its capacity.

Although the standard of price is higher here than in either the class before or the class to follow, the cars in this "family" class are, speaking broadly, the most economical saloon cars made, for this pleasing quality of extra-durability is characteristic of them all.

Big Value.

Third and last comes the class of amazing value for those who must have a big saloon, a cheap saloon, and are not too terribly concerned about the yearly cost of its upkeep.

Two typical cars of this class, both from across the Atlantic, are just now very much in the public eye—the Essex, which has been a quite common and steadily-improving feature of our highways during the last two or three motoring years, and the Erskine, a complete new-comer fathered by Studebaker's, which looks like being the last word in big saloon value. The first costs £260 and the second £295; both have biggish and fairly powerful six-cylinder engines, rated at 17 h.p. and 16 h.p. respectively, which give the cars infinite possibilities in the way of flexible performance. They are both undoubtedly cars of the top-gear type. Their appearances, individual and distinctive and, in the case of the Erskine, almost imposing, are, if slightly showy, very pleasing indeed. Their standard of comfort is remarkably high for their price, and even if one doubts their capacity to keep their better qualities intact over as many years as will the cars of the previous class, one cannot possibly doubt in the slightest degree their usefulness and their value.



The little Renault Saloon de Luxe has the appearance—and accommodation—of quite a big car.

Mr. Gordon Murray is willing to help readers who seek advice on the choice of cars and other motoring matters. Inquiries should be addressed to him at the "Strand" Offices, 8-11, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2.

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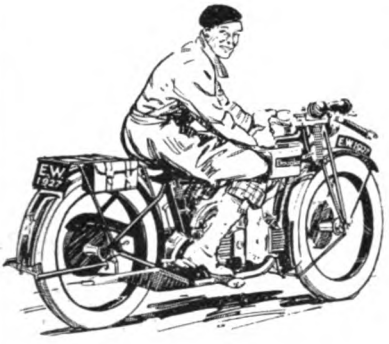

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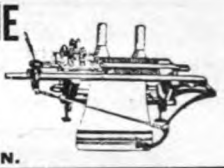

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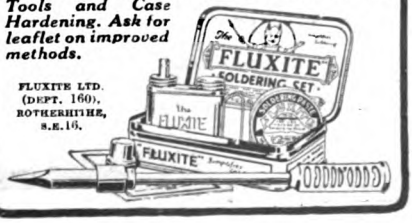

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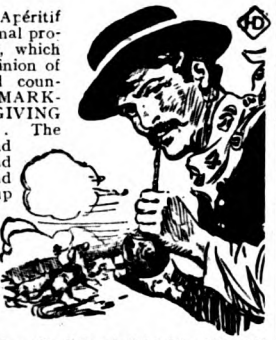

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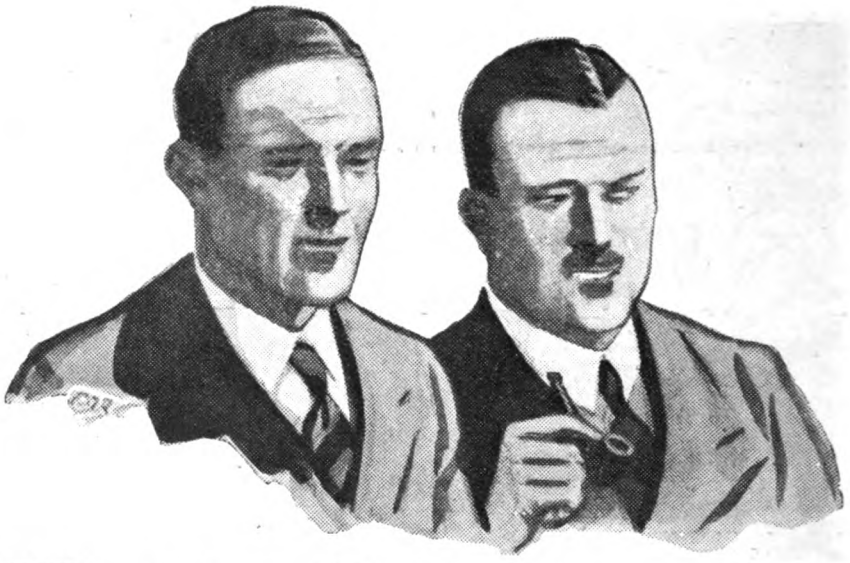

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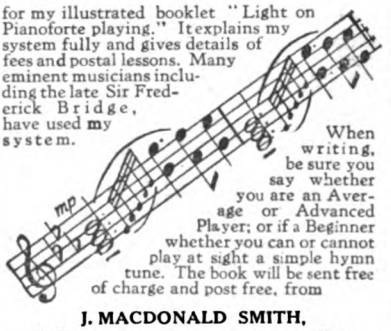

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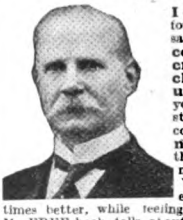

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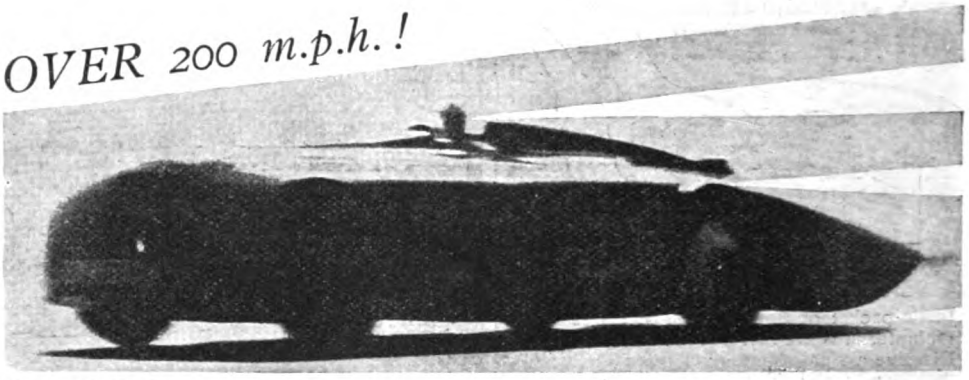

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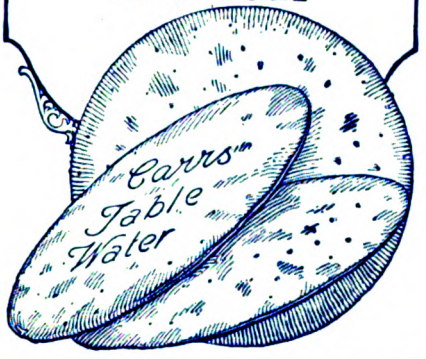

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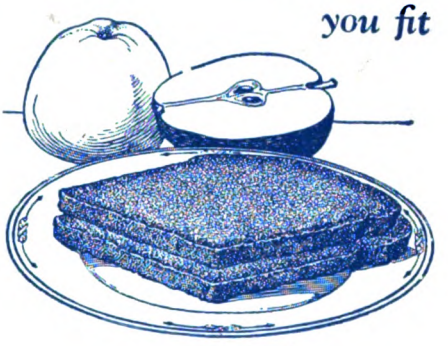

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